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At Dead of Night

Or, THE PATERNOSTER ENIGMA

By Julian F. Darrow

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CHAPTER I.

THE STRANGE ROBBERY.

"THIS is the Hotchkiss apartment, Mr. Blair; the place that has been looted!"

Anthony Tarbox, the superintendent of the Compton Bachelor Apartments, had closed and locked the door just before he spoke these thrilling words. And the well-known investigator of crime, whom he had ushered into the suite of rooms, stood quietly just where he was, looking about him.

He saw a chamber that was elegantly furnished, and which opened into another equally as fine; while the door of an up-to-date bathroom stood partly open. Evidently the absent promotor, Ralph Hotchkiss, was a man who fancied luxury about as much as any one whom Blair had ever known.

The room seemed in more or less disorder. Things were thrown about, drawers half opened, and a glance only was required to convince any one that a hurried search must have recently occurred.

Over in one corner of the sittingroom a small safe was open, and it seemed rifled of its contents, for quite a variety of small packages lay in front, evidently cast aside by the thief as not worth taking away with him after he had selected his booty.

Gideon Blair smiled. He had seen the signs so often that he never committed himself offhand.

Without saying a single word he walked around the room, closely examining many things. Occasionally he bent over, either to handle some object that had particularly caught his eye, or else to observe more closely. After that he sauntered into the other chamber, and also peeped in beyond the door of the elegant bathroom. All the while the middle-aged superintendent watched him with an eagerness he did not make any attempt to conceal.

"Well?" he said, as the sleuth once more joined him.

"Who is Hotchkiss?" asked the other, tersely.

"A broker and promoter, quite a daring manipulator, I've been told."

"Been with you long?"

"A year or more."

"Looks like he might be well off."

"Often rolling in money, sir. He engaged in big schemes, that brought in the cash in great wads."

"Sometimes, I don't suppose that all his plans carried out?"

"Oh, no! I remember several occasions when he missed fire, and looked rather blue for a bit; but he always succeeded in getting on his feet quickly again."

"Ever had this happen before?"

"Do you mean a robbery in the Compton, sir?"

"A looting of the Hotchkiss apartments in particular."

"Oh! no, sir. This is his first experience. I shall dislike to inform him of it very much."

"Then he is away at the present time?"

"Yes, sir. Received a telegram yesterday that called him hurriedly to Boston. But I expect him back by evening. He went on the boat, I believe, but will return by train."

The detective mused. There was a faint smile on his face as though he might have made some discovery that gave him more or less amusement. Perhaps he had known a tricky promoter before now to turn the tables on his creditors by looting his own safe!

"What sort of a gentleman is this Mr. Hotchkiss? Can you describe him to me, Tarbox?"

"He is about the medium in build, rather good-looking, with blue eyes, a dark mustache, and dresses like a nabob."

"H'm! not a very accurate description, if I were intending to hunt the gentleman on the crowded street. Please stop and think a minute. Is there anything out of the common about him such as would be apt to stamp his individuality—a mark about his face, or his hand for instance?"

The superintendent looked at him as though he fancied the sleuth were possessed of uncanny powers.

"By thunder! you hit the nail on the head, sir, that time. He has such a mark!" he exclaimed.

"One of his hands has possibly a crooked finger?"

"Yes."

"The left hand, perhaps?"

"That's so, Mr. Blair; the little finger of his left hand is bent. He told me it was the result of an accident when a boy."

Blair chuckled.

"Possibly that accident is going to bear unexpected fruit for Mr. Hotchkiss at this late day."

"But how in the wide world——"

"Please do not ask me any questions. I am here to do all that, and you to answer, my friend. Have you any reason to believe that the absent gentleman made it a point to keep valuable papers, as well as money, in his rooms?"

"Sure."

"On what do you base your belief?"

"Why, he told me so himself."

"When was this?"

"Just yesterday. Incidentally mentioned it when he was going off on his little trip. Gave me his key for fear he should lose it, and said that he hoped there would be no fire while he was away, as he happened to have some papers belonging to a business friend in his safe, that were very valuable."

"Why should he say that about a fire?"

"Why, we had a little scare here a month back; nothing done in the way of damage, but for a while there was great excitement among our gentlemen guests. It happened near morning when they were all abed."

"Did he go away frequently, this Mr. Hotchkiss?"

"A dozen times a year, sometimes for a week or two. He is engaged in big deals, and has to visit other promoters in Philadelphia, Baltimore, or Boston."

"I suppose he has always made it a practice of coming to you with his key, and telling you what he had in his little safe yonder?"

"Oh! no, sir."

"Has he ever done this before?"

"I cannot remember it just now. I think I would be safe in saying 'no' to that question, Mr. Blair."

"Thank you, Tarbox. It is a pleasure to have such straightforward answers. I remember that it was characteristic of you years ago, when you were a star as a gymnast in the circus arena. It was there we became acquainted, when I was starting on my career as a detective. That bad tumble brought about a big change in your means of earning a livelihood, Anthony?"

"Yes, it was nip and tuck for a while with me, for I had not saved much. Finally I fell into this snug berth, partly through your influence, and when I had need of a detective, of course I sent for you at once."

"You told me that you found the door locked when you entered here to look after the windows and air the rooms this morning?"

"Yes."

"Then, if the thief came in that way he possessed a skeleton key that would open the door. But how about that window I see open?"

"Mr. Hotchkiss said he had closed all the windows, because it looked like rain at the time he left."

"Oh! he took the trouble to inform you of that, did he—sort of impressed it on your mind that the windows were every one shut down? I should say that this Mr. Hotchkiss must be a gentleman given to minding small matters."

"I reckon he is, sir."

"And consequently when you entered here and saw the sad state of things this morning, realizing that a robbery had occurred right under your nose, if I may say such a thing, possibly you noted the fact that the window was open?"

"I did, sir."

"And you even have allowed yourself to have a suspicion that in some mysterious way the bold loot hunter may have managed to gain entrance here by that channel?"

"We are on the third floor, sir. The roof is only three more flights up."

"Nevertheless, that would be a most extraordinary feat for even a daring burglar, to swing loose above, and slide down a rope possibly for forty feet."

"I guess that's true, Mr. Blair."

"And after he was through he would have quite a bunch of stuff to carry away to climb up a rope, or even allow himself to be drawn up that distance, would try any man's nerve."

"Sure. Still, you will admit that it is not impossible?"

"Nothing is impossible, Anthony, when you are dealing with master rogues. But I imagine the method of entering was easier than that."

He looked out of the window as he spoke.

After drawing his head in once more he turned to the superintendent and said:

"The window just above would afford a possible means for reaching this sill easily. Who occupies that apartment, Tarbox?"

Then the superintendent smiled.

CHAPTER II.

A GREWSOME FIND.

"Nothing doing there, I reckon, Mr. Blair," he said.

"Nevertheless, please answer my question."

"Well, you see, sir, that suite happens to be occupied by a very rich bachelor by the name of Paternoster, Alexis Paternoster. Perhaps you know him, sir?"

"Not personally, but I have heard more or less about him. Money to burn, it is said, and lives like a sybarite, with every luxury about him. Well, I suppose that under such circumstances it would be the height of folly to imagine that the robber came down from his rooms. What is that buzzing, Tarbox?"

"A telephone, sir," replied the other, frowning and looking slightly uneasy.

"Very insistent, don't you think? I've heard it at least three times since we entered here. And it seems to come from up above us!"

"It certainly does, sir."

"Mr. Paternoster out, do you suppose?"

"I don't think so. At least, he was shut in last night, by a return of his old trouble, gout in the foot."

"His penalty for fast living, doubtless. That is a rich man's disease entirely. There it goes again. Apparently your gentleman above must be a good sleeper, if that buzzing fails to arouse him."

"On the contrary I've heard Mr. Paternoster declare he was a light sleeper; he even complained several times of the noise in the street early mornings, and threatened to make a change if it couldn't be abated."

"But I presume he has a valet. How comes it that party doesn't stop the incessant jangling of the phone bell? I should think Paternoster would register a kick along that line."

"It happens that Ralph Arundel, his valet, was away last night, and I don't remember seeing him come in this morning as yet. Something important took him off, for his face looked serious. Still, I thought Mr. Paternoster looked rather relieved to have him go!"

At that the detective raised his eyebrows. He made no remark about it, but undoubtedly the fact must have impressed itself on his subconsciousness, because of its significance.

"H'm! suppose you go up and find out why no one answers that call, Tarbox?" he suggested.

"I've been thinking that I would, sir. Of course there's no cause for uneasiness; but somehow I dislike to have the bell ringing so frequently. Some one wants to communicate with the gentleman very bad, it seems. But he has lots of boon companions. He leads a happy-go-lucky life, with plenty at his command."

"Still, such men are never really happy, Tarbox. You, too, are a bachelor, but I warrant you get more real enjoyment out of the days than this rich rake. Are you going up to inquire?"

"Yes, sir," said the other, smiling with evident pleasure at the words of his old friend.

"Then if you don't mind, I'll go along."

"Sure."

As he spoke the superintendent cast a quick side glance toward the sleuth. He suspected that the other might have an object concealed back of his apparent indifference, and sure enough, he had.

They did not bother passing along to the elevator, the winding stairs being more convenient.

"These come up from the entrance, do they not?" asked Blair, as they ascended.

"Oh! yes, though seldom used, unless some accident happens to the elevator, sir."

"Still, I was thinking that if any slippery customer did manage to get inside, while the car was above, he could make his way up unnoticed."

"If the boy at the door happened to be asleep or off duty he could; but we are very particular here as a rule. We have to be, for we have a clientele of rich guests, who would not stand for carelessness."

He led the way along the floor which they had by this time reached, and quickly came to a door. Upon this he knocked. There being no response, the superintendent repeated his summons in a louder key. Still there came no reply. Tarbox looked at his companion. Uneasiness had changed to positive alarm on his face.

"I don't like this," he said, shaking his head.

"Oh, the gentleman may have gone out after all, last night," replied Blair, to draw him along.

"I'm dead sure he didn't, though."

"You must have some reason for saying that?"

"Well, yes. It chanced that I saw him about eleven, and he had his foot bound up then as though still unable to get his shoe on."

"Knock again, and louder!"

Tarbox complied. His knuckles beat a positive tattoo upon the panel of the door, so that a couple of heads were thrust out from doors further along the hall. Though his summons had apparently aroused other late sleeping guests, it had no visible effect on the occupant of the Paternoster apartments.

"Have you a pass key?" asked the detective, grimly.

"Yes," replied Tarbox, drawing a long breath.

"Then use it!"

"Do you think——"

"Never mind what I think; there is but one thing for you to do under the circumstances. Open this door!"

The superintendent of the building put a hand in his pocket, drew a key out, and with a sense of impending trouble inserted it in the lock. As he opened the door, he found himself gently but firmly pushed into the room by the detective, who, following, quickly closed the door.

The electric light was turned on, so that every part of the room could be readily seen. Tarbox was staring at something that was huddled in a big chair close to the table. It was the figure of a man!

"First lock the door again, Anthony. We do not want impertinent and inquisitive parties poking in here."

Mechanically the other obeyed. He was plainly overwhelmed by the nature of the catastrophe which he now realized had come upon the famous bachelor apartments known as the "Compton." When he turned, after doing his duty, he found that his companion was already bending over the grewsome object in the chair.

"Is he dead, sir?" asked Tarbox, in a hushed voice.

"Without question, and has been for quite some hours," returned the other, calmly.

The superintendent stared at the figure. He could not well see the white ghastly face, for the head had fallen upon the breast when death seized the middle-aged bachelor in his relentless grip.

"This is Mr. Paternoster, is it not?"

So Tarbox forced himself to bend down in order to observe that awful face better.

"Yes, sir, it is," he replied.

Then he looked eagerly at the detective.

"Could he have been taken in some sort of fit, sir? Once he told me that he had such a trouble, although he believed he had long since outgrown them."

The sleuth shook his head.

"Look closer, Tarbox, and you will not give that idea room in your brain. Please notice the marks on his throat! Don't they look to you as though a pair of strong hands had clutched him there?"

"My heavens! you are right. Why, I swear it may be a murder, instead of a suicide or an accident!" gasped the other.

Tarbox had led an adventurous life while an acrobat, traveling with the circus; he must have witnessed his share of exciting events; but of late he had fallen into quiet ways, and this thing upset him greatly.

"It was a murder, there is no question about it. And apparently for spoils, too, if one can judge from the fact that the place seems to have been looted, though hardly to the extent that the apartment below was."

"Could there be any connection between the two?" demanded Tarbox, suddenly, recovering some of his nerve.

"That remains to be seen. At present I am inclined to believe that the two robberies happen to be coincidences only."

"His watch is gone, and it was a very valuable one, too. Feel and see if his pocketbook is there, sir."

Apparently Tarbox felt a natural repugnance about touching the corpse; then again he may have realized that he had no business to do so while this accomplished solver of mysteries was on hand.

"There is nothing in his pockets; and please note that this one is turned inside-out, as though the thief in his or her hurry did not wait to replace it, after dragging out the contents.

Again the superintendent looked anxiously at his companion.

"You said 'her,' sir?"

"Why, yes, I believe it slipped out."

"Was it an accident, sir, or have you already discovered anything to make you suspect that this terrible crime has been committed by—a woman?"

"I'm going to answer that by another question, Anthony. You have some secret reason to dread such a thing coming to pass. Tell me why?"

"I suppose I must, Mr. Blair, though I'm ashamed to admit that for once I was remiss in carrying out the positive rule of this apartment, which forbids the entrance of any females not servants working under me; and I employ all colored help, you notice."

"Ah! and you allowed a lady to enter here last night?"

"I did, sir, and she came to see Mr. Paternoster, too."

CHAPTER III.

"DEAD LIPS TELL NO TALES."

The detective looked at the form in the chair.

"The late Mr. Paternoster was apparently no weakling, Tarbox?" he ventured.

"Oh! no, sir. He belonged to the New York Athletic Club, and some time back had a reputation as a bowler and sparrer, perhaps along other lines, also. But during the two years I've known him he was falling back."

"Still, quite a husky man for a woman or girl to overcome, and choke to death!"

"Great guns! I should say it was utterly out of the question."

"Meaning with regard to the one particular lady you happen to have in mind. But Anthony, there are many muscular women to be met with. You yourself have seen more than a few when with the show."

"That's true, sir. Of course there are lots who could knock you or me out in a jiffy. I've seen one woman hold a cannon on her back while it was fired. But then that doesn't apply to Miss Cassie."

"Cassie who?"

"Miss Paternoster, sir," with reluctance.

"Apparently some relative of his?" jerking his thumb in the direction of the dead man.

"His niece, sir. She is on the stage, only she uses another name, Cassie Newcomb."

"I remember seeing it, and if I mistake not she is now on the boards in comic opera. Was she here last night to see her uncle?"

"Yes, sir."

"And did he want to see her?"

"Well, I suppose so, for he made the arrangement with me, and said that it was very important she should come, since he was unable to keep an engagement he had with her."

"Was he fond of his niece?"

"I have always believed so. In fact, I happen to know that she was to be his heiress, for I was a witness to his last will some months back, being allowed to read the document before I signed it."

"Listen. Do you know if Cassie was aware of the good luck in store for her some day when this uncle of hers slipped his cable, and departed hence?"

"He told her so right in my presence. Oh! yes, sir, I am sure of that fact."

"Was she fond of him?"

"I think she was. He was mighty good to her in regard to money matters. But I've heard, sir, that the young woman is unusually well spoken of among theatrical people. You know my old associations make me take some interest in the theaters, and I have some good friends on the boards."

"And you say they all speak good words for Cassie?"

"I've been told that she's an exception to the rule of show-girls, and that Willis Strang is going to be a lucky fellow when he gets her to marry him."

"That name sounds familiar too; do you happen to refer to the Willis Strang who has been making a mark for himself lately in aviation, breaking records and having his picture in the papers every few days?"

"I suppose that's the one, for he's connected with some of these aeroplane meets. He was with her last night, too."

"What! do you mean up here in this room?" with another quick look toward the chair; as though after all, those tell-tale finger-marks on the throat of the dead man might be explained on this score.

"No, sir, he remained below with me, after I had managed to slip Miss Cassie up the stairs without any one being the wiser for it."

"She came down later and joined him, then?"

"Yes, sir, about half an hour or so. I think the clock had just struck twelve when she came down in the elevator. I was knocked all in a heap, and after they had gone thought to warn the boy to keep a still tongue in his head, but he laughed and said it had all been fixed, so I supposed the young lady had bribed him."

"When Cassie joined her friend, did you notice whether she happened to appear excited?"

"That was so. I remember it distinctly. She was unusually pretty, with so much color in her face."

"You mean she was flushed?"

"Yes, sir."

"And what did she do on joining the gentleman in waiting?"

"He seemed anxious, and I saw her nod her head several times, while his face brightened up."

"Did you hear her say anything?"

The superintendent turned pale, as though a sudden terrible thought had suddenly flashed before his mind's eye.

"Yes, I did."

"Please repeat the words exactly."

"She bent her head and whispered, but I caught the sentence. 'It was a hard job, Willis, but I succeeded. It's all right!'"

"It Miss Cassie a muscular young lady, Anthony?"

"Why, not that you could notice. In fact, she's inclined to be slender, though with a mighty pretty face and figure. But I swear I'll never believe that wisp of a girl could do such a thing as this, never!"

"And doubtless you are right, Tarbox. Is she a blonde girl?"

"Yes, decidedly so, with golden hair."

The detective nodded as though the answer gave him a certain amount of satisfaction. And undoubtedly he had his reasons for feeling so. He did not tell everything he knew, and perhaps he had picked up a clew while the other was looking elsewhere.

"Somebody has hunted around here, and evidently carried away a certain amount of stuff, including, as you say, the watch and pocketbook of the gentleman who lies there. No doubt, if he could speak the whole thing must be plain enough to us; but since dead lips tell no tales we must try to find out the truth otherwise."

"I wonder——"

"A suggestion has suddenly dawned upon you, plainly, Tarbox; let's have it then. Sometimes little things give rise to others of great importance."

"I just happened to think of Arundel."

"I believe you said that was the name of the missing valet?"

"Yes, sir, Ralph Arundel."

"Has he been with the gentleman long?"

"A year. Mr. Paternoster seemed to think a heap of the fellow, and I always got along easy with Ralph. He was quiet, and attended faithfully to his duties. The gentleman often let him off for a night—I never knew why."

"So that last night was really no exception?"

"No, sir."

"You said that you thought he looked pleased to get the valet off his hands last night?"

"Yes, because he was expecting that visit from his niece, you see."

"She had never visited him before?"

"Once only. He brought a party home to see his rooms. But that was in broad daylight, when the rules allowed of such a visit."

"I find myself interested in this Arundel. It is an uncommon name, to begin with. Then, according to your account, I seem to have picked up the impression that there is something a bit mysterious about him."

"You mean connected with his frequent staying away all night. Yes, I got that idea in my head several times; but came to the conclusion that it was none of my business, and dropped it."

"Which was quite right under the circumstances; but since conditions have suddenly taken on the nature of a terrible crime having been committed under your roof, we must consider that it is some of our business what he does when he is away. I don't suppose you have seen the fellow since last evening?"

"I have not, as I remarked once before."

"Evidently, then, he has not returned; and yet it is now eight o'clock. When off before has he been as late as this in showing up?"

"Perhaps once or twice, but as a rule he is here promptly at seven, to take up his duties in connection with the wardrobe of Mr. Peternoster, who was something of a dandy in his attire."

"Then this late coming may be set down as something rather out of the

(Continued on page twelve.)

"Yes, that is Carmen."

The Winning of Mary

Or, HEARTS OF GOLD

By FERGUS JEROME

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CHAPTER V.
READY FOR TROUBLE.

THOSE were pretty strenuous days for me. It seemed as though there were a thousand things to be done, and every night I found it wise to lay out the more important jobs to be attended to on the following day, so that they might be taken up systematically. Mary Smith took a deep interest in all that was going on, and many times gave me the benefit of her opinion, which I frequently found to be better than my own; for it is certainly true that a woman's view of things differs from that of a mere man, and often touches on points he would never think of.

As the days wore on, we naturally became more and more accustomed to the strange situation, and many discussions resulted from any difference of opinion; yet I do not think either of us ever showed the slightest ill humor in case the decision went the other way.

I had easily built another apartment after my own room was done, and made it weatherproof, so that when a storm descended upon us some weeks after landing we had no reason to complain. On her part she managed to make the place mighty homelike, and it was always with the greatest pleasure in the world that after a day on the beach I would draw near the camp, and confess that it appealed to me in a most irresistible manner.

And yet, after all, what would it have been without that trim little figure around which all these other things seemed to revolve—nothing more than any one of numerous other camps in which it had been my fortune to sojourn at times in the past—it was toward the spot where she happened to be employed that my eyes always flew first of all, and when I saw her sunny smile my heart fairly beat like the hammer of a blacksmith, with satisfaction.

We got on amazingly well, considering that both of us were blessed with minds of our own, and ready to back up our opinions with argument, yielding only after convincing measures had been marshaled by the other; for early in our intercourse Mary had given me distinctly to understand that in talks of this kind she refused to be treated like a woman to whom a man was expected to give in simply on account of her sex; and declared that while fortune insisted upon marooning us on this island we must act toward each other as comrades, and that she desired to be looked upon in the same generous spirit I would show toward a fellow man.

I understood the spirit that dictated this decree, and from that hour, when we differed as to some method of procedure, we argued the matter in a good-natured way to the end—if I sometimes gave in even when not wholly convinced, she need never know the fact; and it was enough for me to see the satisfaction that followed her victory, which made her unconsciously assume a patronizing air toward me that was delightfully fresh and charming.

Never did I offend her by word or look during this time; I had early made up my mind that there must be a bar between us, and that no matter how she might be enshrined in my heart as its queen, while we were thus exiled, and she was helpless as it were, for me to declare my passion would be cruelly taking an unfair advantage of her position.

Hence it was that at times when I found my feelings showing in the ardent looks I bent upon her, I took myself sternly to task, called myself a brute, and for a whole day after that would absent myself as much as possible from her delightful society, just as a penance; until, perhaps, I would find her in tears, and upon asking the cause would hear her say that she feared she must have offended me in some way, and that she was unhappy.

Then I would have to fight the battle of my life to avoid saying things which might give her cause for genuine sorrow; but on such occasions I was accustomed to laughing heartily, and declaring that she was of course utterly mistaken, and that my moroseness sprang from a natural disposition to have occasional moody spells; or else that some of the perplexing problems which I was daily called upon to solve gave me concern.

I do not know whether she believed me or not, when I made these unblushing rejoinders; but she used to look at me strangely; and once I am sure I detected a roguish smile flit across her face, which gave me cause for wonder. To tell the truth, while things seemed so bright on their face, I did have many things to give me cause for anxiety, though wisely keeping all these troubles from my companion, not wishing to add unnecessarily to her burdens.

Down the hillside like a descending rocket I went.

Knowing that she would doubtless welcome a change of clothes, one day I made up my mind to bring home the package of garments that had belonged to the two poor victims of the storm; but first of all I explained to her how essential it was that we look at such things in a common-sense way, remembering that the living had to be taken care of, and that those who were gone were beyond the reach of trouble.

Finally she consented to accept the garments, after I had assured her that neither of the former owners had been her mistress, Mrs. Partington, which I could readily do; still, the fact seemed to throw something of a damper upon our spirits during that night.

The next day, when I returned in the evening great was my surprise to find that Mary had doffed her black dress with its white apron, that had long served as the badge of her calling, and was arrayed in a very neat costume which she had managed to alter after a fashion to suit her smaller figure. At first I did not like the change, for I seemed to miss something familiar at the supper table; but by degrees I became accustomed to it, and besides, she would always look pretty and bewitching in anything.

So the days turned into weeks, and as yet we had not sighted a vessel; nor had we been disturbed by the visit of any Chinese pirates from the mainland or adjacent islands, a fact that gave me cause for thanksgiving every night, as I roamed around the camp before retiring.

I had managed to bank up around our house and so protect the walls that it could readily pass with its stockade, for a fort; and as it had been built with an eye for protection, with the backing of my rifles I believed I could hold out against quite a force of enemies, provided they did not come upon us unawares. That was ever in my thought.

Indeed, I was becoming so nervous about it that my absences from home were gradually being shortened; and I found a strange thrill in the region of my heart every time I approached the camp after being away even for an hour, as though some danger were being suspended over my head ready to fall at any moment.

There was a hill back of us which I daily ascended in order to take a look around the horizon with a pair of very good binoculars found among some other traps in a trunk that had come ashore later, and which may have belonged to one of the officers aboard the Triton; here I had also erected a pole, upon the top of which was hung the Union Jack upside down, as a token of distress which would be readily understood by any passing mariner.

Off to the southeast I could at times see land of some sort, but whether this were a part of the Malay Peninsula or another island there was no means of finding out. And once I had been under the impression that some tiny white spots which looked like sea-gulls on the water near that dim shore must in reality be the sails of native craft, cruising hither and thither—how eagerly I watched to make sure they were not heading in our direction; and with what a feeling of thanksgiving did I ascertain that this could not be a fact.

I said nothing about the boats to Mary; but it added to my private cares, and I was compelled to assume a cheerfulness I certainly did not feel in order that her observing eyes, that seemed to read my very thoughts, might not detect something different in my looks.

I thought I could now understand how poor old Robinson must have felt; and yet he had only himself to worry about, while in my case the trouble was augmented by my fears concerning what would happen to this fair girl, whom I was growing to love better than my life, if disaster came upon me. Still, there were many compensations for this sense of responsibility resting uopn me; for it certainly gave me a feeling of proprietorship that quite tickled my fancy; besides, the gravity of our situation called out the best there was in me, and I never allowed myself to fall into careless habits that would have been the case had my fellow exile been one of my own sex.

Of course, long ago she had discovered that a man may be a common sailor and at the same time prove himself a gentleman of some education; I could see that she felt more or less curiosity concerning my past; but it pleased me, for the present at least, to say little about it, though from time to time things cropped up by accident that caused her to raise her arched eyebrows and look at me very seriously, as though wondering whether I could be other than I seemed.

In order not to lose track of time, I had made a calendar early in our experience, and each evening crossed off the date, so that we knew exactly what day of the month it was. And I had continued this three months ahead, marking the twenty-first of September with a black cross, which, when it caught her eye naturally aroused more or less curiosity, so that she imperiously demanded to know what it meant; and laughing in some confusion, for I had not thought of being interrogated in this manner, I was forced to acknowledge that it marked the date of a very important engagement—in fact that I should be in New York on that particular day unless I meant to give up all hope of winning a wager; at which we looked at each other and both burst out laughing, for it certainly appeared that my chances of getting there on time were next to nil.

And I noticed that after our little chat Mary watched me out of the corners of her eyes more than ever before; from which I inferred that somehow she had begun to entertain certain suspicions about me; but then I went calmly on my way, not changing my respectful attitude toward her one iota, satisfied to hold her good opinion and do my duty in the premises.

I think that it was almost three weeks after we landed on our little island that the thing I had been dreading all the while came to pass; and the time of peace and almost happiness on my part was forced to give way to the stress and storm of battle, with peril hovering continually over our heads.

Sometimes it comes to me as a confused dream, and it is difficult to believe we passed safely through such riotous times; but always I see her face before me, and realize what astonishing things a man may be enabled to accomplish when he strives with heart and soul in the service of the girl he truly loves.

Once only had we seen the smoke of a steamer low down in the western sky; and our hearts beat high with expectancy and hope, only to suffer a reaction; for the vessel passed by without coming close enough to discover our signal of distress on the top of the little peak.

Mary allowed herself to relapse for a brief time, and cried bitterly; while I endeavored to cheer her, making a sad mess of it, I am afraid, since my tongue was tied, and I dared not say just what was in my heart; but after a bit she smiled through her tears like the sun peeping out of the clouds on an April day; and presently everything was lovely again; but I had come mighty near disclosing my feelings, and had to take myself sternly to task immediately after.

So the time passed, as I have said, until three weeks were gone; and then came the sudden change that altered our little Eden, and brought new anxieties in its train.

CHAPTER VI.
THE YELLOW HORDE.

It happened that I had spent much time in China during the past years, no matter in what capacity; and the ways of the people were familiar to me; I could even speak more or less of the language, and understood even more; which gift is apt to prove of considerable value to any one traveling through the Far East.

Mary never wearied of hearing me speak of the strange sights I had seen during this time, but I found I had to be very circumspect in my recitals, lest I overstep the mark and narrate some things which, for reasons of my own, I preferred should remain untold—at least for a time.

After that little storm the weather had turned fair again, and each day seemed only a replica of the preceding one, with a smiling blue sky overhead and the murmuring sea around us. One morning I had been detained longer than usual about the home camp attending to certain changes which Mary had shyly suggested, and which would add to my comfort; she seemed to be under the impression that in order to allow her freedom to have full swing I was denying myself many things that ought to be my right as a half owner in the camp; and in her autocratic way that was so delightful to me she now insisted that I change my habits in so far as these matters were concerned—in other words that I keep to my agreement, and treat her as an equal, a comrade, and not simply as a young lady whose wishes must be catered to.

Now, I was not suffering in the least, but at the same time it certainly did delight me to learn that she was jealous of my comfort, and kept tab to see that in endeavoring to please her I did not overstep the mark and deny myself what she thought was my legitimate share of space.

I picked up my rifle as usual, and with the customary pleasant good-by stalked away, casting back a longing look when free from her observation, and making up my mind that since there were few things so pressing as to demand my at-

tention abroad, I would return presently to camp, after my usual observation from the peak where the signal flew.

My thoughts were pleasant as I trudged upward under the shelter of the trees, for in fancy I could picture the time when a rescuing party came to take us away from our little island home, and then, under the different conditions, I would feel free to say what was in my mind; perhaps I had some hope that the answer might not be so grievous disappointment, for eyes have a tendency to tell secrets that are hidden in the soul, and Mary's were very expressive orbs.

Then suddenly I stopped short in my tracks and gazed again up at the top of the hill, now in plain view; for the mast I had erected there no longer stood outlined against the summer sky, so that the Union Jack failed to meet my eyes.

What mystery was this? We had had no wind during the preceding night to uproot the flagstaff; and besides, it had withstood the gale a week previous, so that it was unlikely that a gust of breeze could have felled it. Only one thing could explain the strange absence of our signal, and that gave me a sudden cold chill—human agencies had been at work—we were no longer the sole occupants of this island Eden!

I turned and looked downward toward such portions of the shore as came within the range of my vision—looked with a feeling of expectancy and horror, and fully believing I must discover half a dozen junks or proas in which had crept over from the mainland during the dark hours of the night while we slept peacefully. Nothing was in sight, however, though as I could only see a portion of the shore line, this did not reassure me one particle.

Then I thought of Mary left alone and unprotected down in the camp. What if some of these marauders came upon her before I could return—the very thought thrilled me as nothing else on earth could do; and turning around I sped down that hillside like a descending rocket, wild with alarm, and at the same time burning with fury as I contemplated some wretch of a Malay or Chinese laying a hand on the sacred person of my charming little comrade.

As I rushed along I gave little heed to my footsteps or the fact that possibly some bushwhacker might take a pot-shot at me from his shelter; danger had no terror for me just then, my sole idea being to get back home with as little waste of time as possible. And my heart seemed in my throat when a sudden shot rang out from the very quarter where the stockade was located; the familiar ring told me that a Marlin had been discharged, and if so who but Mary may have pressed the trigger?

I burst out of the bushes with the impetuosity of a wildcat engine, and what I saw added fuel to my alarm; for there were half a dozen men rushing toward the gate of our compound, where I saw Mary struggling in the arms of another, while a comrade was dancing around fantastically, trying to nurse his leg as though he had received a bullet in the calf.

I knew that it was up to me to do something on the spot; nor did I wait on the order of my actions; with those savage pirates running toward the gate to attempt to overtake them would be folly; but in my hands I held a speedy messenger able to fly with the fleetness of the wind; and thank Heaven I had always been accounted a crack shot with any species of firearm—I never felt so grateful for anything in my life as I did over this fact just then when the occasion was so great.

Dropping down upon one knee I threw the little repeater to my shoulder and sent a hurricane of shots among the runners, as fast as I could pump the gun and press the well-oiled trigger; and never a bit of lead was wasted, I can take my affidavit on that. The Chinese marauders seemed stunned by this sudden and unexpected attack from the rear; and the way in which my bullets kept coming among them, together with the familiar manner in which they toyed with the persons of the pirates, combined to give them a case of panic.

Some went down in a heap, while others started to run madly away; if they showed an inclination to make for the neighboring brush I allowed them to escape; but one fellow who headed straight for the gate of the compound engaged my immediate and everlasting attention, and I was determined to drop him if it took every remaining charge in my magazine. But one shot bowled him over nicely enough, seeing which I gave a shout to relieve my pent-up emotions, and started on a mad gallop for the spot where I had seen Mary struggling with another of the yellow devils.

They had disappeared inside the inclosure so that I ran straight on and burst through the open gate, fearful of what I might find there. Some flitting object caught my eye just vanishing over the top of my rude palisade, and which I imagined must be the fellow of whom I was in search; but thank God, she was there, and apparently unharmed, for she had struggled to her feet, and was stretching out her hands toward me appealingly. I believed at the time just as I do now, that neither of us gave one thought of our own personal safety, but that all our fears were in connection with the other; and she must have thought I had already fallen a victim to the terrible swords of these hangdog ruffians who had burst so suddenly upon her sight.

Having presence of mind enough to slam the door of the compound shut, I fastened the same, and then ran to where she was standing, one hand on her bosom as if to still the tumultuous throbbing of her heart; and the look she gave me as I thus approached was enough to thrill me.

"Oh! thank Heaven you are safe!" she exclaimed, as I took her trembling hand in mine, and sought to reassure her. "I was dreadfully afraid they had killed you! What shall we do? How can we hold out against such desperate ruffians?"

She was dreadfully agitated, as might easily have been expected; but I knew that she was made of the genuine stuff, and presently when she got over the shock a little it would be different, and I could depend upon her to assist as far as lay in her power. So I immediately tried to treat the whole matter as something far less serious than I knew it really must be; for even though we succeeded in beating these men off, they would come again in increased numbers, just as the cannibals did in the case of Robinson; when overwhelmed, we must fall into their hands.

I even assured her that several of the rascals would not be apt to bother us more; at which she shuddered and looked at me with wide eyes, for of course the idea of taking human life was naturally repugnant to her gentle spirit, no matter what the provocation; though I knew full well she would never have hesitated had she seen one of the pirates threatening me with death.

"The fellow who was trying to carry you off—what became of him?" I hastened to ask, glancing inquiringly at the top of the palisade; and seeing this she nodded, trying to force a faint smile upon her pretty though white face.

"Yes, he climbed over there, knowing you were coming; but that is not the strange part of it. You have met that man before, John Henry. He must have been washed ashore where these vandals live, and have cast his fortunes with theirs. He once told me he had lived in Canton for years; and I think he must have been in touch with just such desperate ruffians as these," she exclaimed.

"Who?" I ejaculated. "Do you mean that skunk, Lucian Burgoyne, the man I twice knocked down when he was bothering you? That cur among the pirates, and hand in glove with them? Well, after all, I am not surprised, for birds of a feather flock together; but the third time I try conclusions with Mr. Burgoyne he is apt to go to a warmer clime than Siam or the Malay Peninsula, for I shall present him with my compliments in the shape of a bit of lead, and not on a platter either."

Although I did not say so, I was much wrought up by the startling intelligence she had broached; it was bad enough to think of those yellow scoundrels knocking me out and carrying off Mary; but somehow the idea of that sneering scoundrel obtaining possession of her filled me with a freocity that made me eager to get just one sight of him over the barrel of a rifle—I would ask for nothing more.

There was no time to ask Mary what had happened, for I could easily guess how she had glimpsed the approaching figure and fired as soon as she could pick up the gun which I had insisted she keep ever near for an emergency, and as a sort of relief to my mind. I hastened into the house to procure other rifles, which were to be kept within reach of my ready hand.

Looking out I could see not a sign of the enemy; but several silent figures on the ground where they had fallen attested the good will with which I had sent in my furious gun-fire; they looked ghastly and grim enough, but to my surprise I failed to have the feeling of repugnance that I had always associated with such work, and can only account for it by the overwrought condition of my nerves, and the fact that it was in her service that these things had to be done. To save her from a terrible fate I stood perfectly willing to strew the whole island with the bodies of such hellhounds as these Chinese and Malay pirates were said to be, cruel as tigers and knowing no such word as mercy.

How many were there in the invading party, and what had brought them over here after almost four weeks of absence? Perhaps through Burgoyne they had finally learned of the sinking of the steamer, and in the hopes of picking up valuable flotsam and jetsam had organized this expedition; but he had kept his own counsel a long time then, it would seem, from some motives which we could not fathom. And as the sun mounted higher I looked forward with more or less dread to the time of its setting, for with darkness must come additional peril.

CHAPTER VII.

DEFENDING OUR STOCKADE.

In the face of this mutual danger we seemed to be drawn more toward each other than when the skies of peace hung over our heads; just as one touch of pity makes the whole world akin; so I thought Mary seemed to cling more to me, and her manner was certainly more affectionate than ever before.

It was certainly a pleasure for me to be able to stand up in defense of such a charming little creature; and I counted the peril as of little moment when the reward was so great; even though it consisted of but one glance from those bonny blue orbs there was a subtle magnetism about it that repaid me many times over for all that I did in her behalf.

Noon came and went. We ate our frugal repast, but there was lacking the customary laughter and merry joking; for face to face with so terrible an outlook we had not the heart to exchange badinage or repartee; doubtless my face was seamed with grim determination, and I know that at every little sound Mary's expressive countenance would turn white, and that look of apprehension fly to her eyes as her hand almost unconsciously reached out toward my sleeve.

Once I even had the audacity to take that quivering little member in my own and squeeze it with reassuring force; but if she noticed the act she paid no attention to the same, her mind being at the time so filled with other things of more moment than the mute admiration of her comrade.

Several times I had caught fugitive glimpses of guadily clothed figures passing quickly from one hiding-place to another; but while tempted to try a shot, just to let them know we were on the alert, on second thought I refrained, feeling that the chances of a hit were but scant, and that such a thing as a miss would only give them more courage.

There was but little I could do to insure the proficiency of our defenses, since at the time the palisade was built I had exhausted my resources in trying to render it as near impregnable against attack as possible; and since the little keg was always kept filled with water we were in a position to stand out against the enemy as long as our ammunition held, and a generous Heaven kept me from falling under the fire of the pirates.

So the day dragged its weary length along. I fairly counted the minutes, much as a condemned criminal might who feels that his time is growing short; for what that night might bring forth gave me the horrors.

Again and again had we gone over the situation, endeavoring to cover the whole ground so as to know what was to be done in any emergency; I even suggested that under cover of darkness we creep away from the home camp and head for a second one we had arranged in the forest; but with her clearer vision she declared that, knowing ourselves now on the island they would search and eventually find us; and as I very well knew the other place did not offer the same advantages for making a desperate defense as this did.

Then another scheme, desperate enough in all conscience, yet offering a bare chance of success, came into my distracted mind, and I mentioned it to Mary. It was that we load ourselves with arms, and under cover of darkness leave the fortified camp, skirting the shore in that quarter where it seemed most likely we should find the boats of the yellow horde. Then, selecting the one best adapted for our flight, we could set sail while they were engaged in stalking the abandoned camp, perhaps getting off undiscovered.

She weighed this carefully before deciding against it, for really it did possess some features that to my mind were alluring; but then I was a man, and fond of all manner of adventure from boyhood up; while she belonged to the opposite sex, and viewed things from a different standpoint. But it too was turned down, though a bit reluctantly.

"If we could be sure of finding the boats and getting away without discovery, I would say go; but it is so uncertain that I dare not chance it, save as a very last resort. If it comes to abandoning our retreat because we can no longer hold out, then such a course would be the right thing to do; but as it is, I firmly believe we are better off here," she said, and I had nothing further to urge, for with me her wishes were law.

I might have suggested that I could slip out and spy upon the enemy, possibly learning certain facts in connection with their intentions, as well as the position of their water craft; but the very thought of leaving Mary alone gave me a queer sinking at the heart, and the words died on my lips. Come what would, me must stand by our guns and try to beat the villains off when they again attacked.

And now the sun was setting. How many times we had gone to the top of the little hill just to see him drop out of sight behind the vast expanse of water lying to the west of our island; but our sensations were totally different now, for alarm and anxiety had taken hold upon our hearts, and the coming of night seemed associated with dire foreboding.

But I had armed myself to the teeth, and was resolved to make these yellow fiends pay dearly for any victory they might attain; I had even laid several cunning traps by means of which they might be surprised and perhaps stampeded when attempting to storm the barricade; for a generous supply of ammunition allowed of my being prodigal in its use, especially when the need was so desperate.

Again we ate in almost silence. I can hardly tell how sorry I felt for the little woman compelled to endure all this mental suffering, such as was calculated to try even the boldest heart among men; but it was at least a pleasure to see how she compelled herself to face the situation with an assumed smile of confidence on her lips. I knew that it was only meant to reassure me that I might not believe her to be frightened, and thus lose my own nerve. In that dark hour she became more precious to me than ever before; because I seemed possessed of a horrible suspicion that I was about to lose her.

We crouched there listening and waiting, knowing instinctively that just on the other side of the palisade there were creeping many stealthy figures of ferocious yellow men bent upon carrying out some plan of attack, the particulars of which we might discover too late to avoid disaster.

I gritted my teeth savagely and resolved to give the hounds a hot reception whenever they appeared; and each minute, as it dragged by like lead, only added to our state of suspense, until, for one, I found myself wishing that something would happen, no matter what—it could not be one-half so bad as this condition of suspended sentence.

From the spot where we crouched we could see the entire top of the palisade, and it had been on account of this that it was selected as a stand. Should anything, mortal or in the line of a beast, attempt to clamber over the stockade, it must be distinctly outlined against the sky beyond, and afford me an excellent mark, which I would really be ashamed to miss.

Holding a rifle in my hands, with others close within reach, I watched that rim eagerly, ready to send in my compliments at a second's warning, and only too anxious to make it a deadly blow, if by such means I could discourage the assailants in the least.

I think that perhaps a full hour may have passed after the coming of night, when operations began. Without a second's warning guns were suddenly discharged just outside the breastworks, and I fancied that the bullets must be directed through crevices between the heavy boards and slabs, for something leapt up an awful pattering on the rocks back of us, as though lead missiles were being flattened out.

I made Mary lie down behind the stones placed there for just such a purpose, although I could see that she was reluctant to take advantage of this screen while I persisted in exposing myself; but she had agreed to do as I said during the time we were beset by the pirates, and promised to look upon me as the boss or commanding general, so that finally she did as I requested.

Of course, this outburst of shouts and shots had a purpose other than the hope of striking those who were supposed to be hovering just within the stockade; and while I did not claim to be a military man, I could see through a millstone, especially one that had such a good-sized hole in it. The racket had been engineered for a two-fold purpose, since there was a chance that I might be hit by a stray bullet and put out of commission, when the victory would be as good as won; and then again it was meant to mask some desperate attempt to storm the redoubt. The device is as old as the eternal hills, no doubt, but ever new with succeeding generations of men. Sometimes, too, it has doubtless succeeded; but then again a hitch occurs in the plans, and things go awry. At least, they certainly did in this case.

I heard Mary give a little bubbling exclamation calculated to call my attention to something that was occurring on the top of the stockade; but I really had no need of this warning, for I was awake to the threatening peril, and had seen the agile figures that clambered to the apex here and there as speedily as they began to show their shaven heads.

I began to work the mechanism of that little Marlin with a rapidity that it would be difficult to beat; and well did the marvel respond to my demands, with never a hitch to interrupt my rapid work; and I felt in my heart a gratitude toward the wonderful accuracy with which modern arms of the first class are constructed in these enterprising days, so that in time of great need such a weapon works with the reliability of precision.

They fell floundering to the ground right and left, as fast as they appeared in view above the escarpment; and how that my hand was in, I felt that with an abundant supply of weapons close to my hand I could keep the good work up indefinitely so long as the other side seemed able to stand it.

But they were coming up a trifle faster than I could keep tally, and I began to fear that some of the daring rascals might be able to fling themselves recklessly over the palisade into the compound, when things would be getting rather mixed. Just then to my astonishment I saw a chap at whom I knew I had not fired lose his frenzied grip on the top of the barrier and pitch head-

(Continued on page fourteen.)

THE DISAPPEARING GOLD

Or, Jack Spence, Detective-Reporter By George T. Hargreaves

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CHAPTER VIII.
THE APE AS ACCOMPLICE.

WELL, I didn't die after all. Close shave though, wasn't it? When I came to, I found myself in bed and all done up in bandages, like some sanctified mummy. I couldn't even see for them. But when I moved my hand a bit, I heard steps near and a soft voice asked:

"Is there anything you want?"

I wanted to know where I was and how I'd got there worst of all, but when I tried to speak, even to whisper I found my throat too raw to permit a sound. Then the horrid encounter with the ape in Hawthorne's treasure room came back to me and, tied up as I was, I shuddered.

"Lie still, then," the soft voice went on, "and don't worry. You're in Bellevue Hospital and safe."

I did breathe easier then. I was afraid I might still be under the roof of that fiend out the Bellrose road. I lay quiet for what seemed like hours. Then I heard a step, quick and decisive, that I well knew. McCabe, my city editor, was in the room.

He touched the hand that lay outside the coverlet. The other hand was bandaged so that it felt like a board.

"Kid"—I was as old as he but he always called a fellow that when he let his gruff covering fall—"however did this happen? You look lucky to be alive."

I opened my mouth to answer, but only a thin wheeze came. I wanted to tell him that I didn't feel alive, but osmified. He realized my predicament at once, for he's a keen soul and he proceeded to tell me what I was most anxious to know:

"You were picked up in the road two miles this side of Bellrose at daylight this morning by a truck gardner on his way to market. He said you were an awful sight. Thought you'd been struck by an automobile and cut to pieces."

It didn't need any more than that to enable me to piece out my deliverance from the grip of that bloodthirsty ape. Hawthorne had dragged it away from me before it had torn me to pieces. Then, to divert all suspicion from himself, he had carted me, senseless, up the automobile road and dropped me where, in the darkness, a machine would be sure to strike me. He evidently expected that the final quietus would be put upon me in that way, and that there'd never be the faintest hint of that sickening combat in his vault, never the smallest suspicion against him.

But a car hadn't struck me. Instead a sleepy wagon driver had saved me. I began to itch for revenge. I felt a flush of anger against the man who evidently meant to separate me from breath. It grew red-hot when a twinge in my shin reminded me of the savage kick he had landed on it on my first call at his door.

"Lucky you had your identification card as a Star man with you, for it got the office busy right away. It took several hours to get you here, but we thought you'd have better care than out in the country. Fortunate we did, too, for when the surgeons looked you over they decided you'd been clawed and gnawed by a mad dog or something worse, and filled you with Pasteur antitoxin to ward off hydrophobia. Say, kid, you must have some story to tell, eh? Didn't think I'd run you into this when I assigned you yesterday."

I nodded my head, but I didn't tell the story. First, because I couldn't, and then because I wouldn't Lying there in that white hospital bed, I made up my mind that I'd keep the secret of the Hawthorne house until I could get up and uncover it fully myself. It was bigger even, I knew now, than I had ever thought it. It was going to be a whale, and I didn't purpose to let any one else lug off the honors of solving it.

But it was a full month before I was ready to resume operations. And when I looked in the mirror, I wasn't too well pleased with myself. I never was much of a looker, but whatever trace of looks I'd had was gone now. A red scar stretched down one cheek. One side of my neck was a mass of livid ridges. A long red scar ran down my throat from my chin to below my collar. All marks of that devilish ape.

There were hidden ones, too. My limbs were scarred, and one arm still showed marks as of teeth, my shoulders were marked as if strips of skin had been torn from them. But I had an ache nowhere—except in my heart, and that was an ache to get even.

It was four weeks to a night when I actively resumed work on the Hawthorne mystery. McCabe, scenting from my hints a big story and an "exclusive," gave me leave to follow my own plans.

Alone, in a black racer-like auto, I plowed through the mud of Long Island. The sky was black, too. I couldn't have picked out a better night to go mystery-chasing. Out into Bellrose and tnen up along the road that ran past the Hawthorne place I rode. It lay dark and bleak and cold, just as I remembered it on the occasion of my former visit.

I drove out half a mile farther, and then turned and came slowly back. I'd carefully muffled my face with goggles and hooded cap and coat collar, until only the tip of my nose was visible. And I haven't such a striking beak that any one could identify me by that alone. So, even though I met the hermit, I was sure he would not know me as the man he had hoped to leave for dead.

Well, I met him all right. Coming back, I saw the daughter and my old enemy the ape loaded into the Hawthorne car. But it didn't pull out of the high-hedged yard until I had passed on. I thrust one hand down into my outside coat pocket to satisfy myself that a little snub-nosed automatic with twelve shots in it was ready for action. I didn't purpose to be caught unarmed again.

I turned off at the first crossroad in order to let them pass. I wanted to follow instead of leading. He went by

all right at a rate that was breaking the speed limit by about twenty miles an hour. When I got back to the main road he was out of sight. So I drove back to the house. But I didn't try to break in again. I had a different plan this time.

A couple of hundred yards down the road beyond the place I found a heavy clump of bushes growing beside the road. It was large enough. I found when I drew up within its shelter, to screen my car from the bleak Hawthorne place. Then I shut off my engine doused all my lamps and prepared for a long wait.

I had the wait, all right. It was striking ten when the hermit's machine re-appeared and he let the daughter down. I watched carefully to discover whether or not the monkey also was taken in. It wasn't. Whereat I felt my heart speed up a bit. "We're going to get some action, my boy, this night," I jollied myself.

A half-hour passed before Hawthorne reappeared. He had a bulky bundle in his arms. I was too far away even to guess what it might contain as he dumped it into the tonneau. He came out again in a moment or two with a black handbag. It reminded me of a surgeon's kit of instruments, but it wasn't I found out later.

He certainly led me a hot chase. Over a road that was so rough it bounded my car about like a rubber ball, I turned loose the high speed. Into pools of water I dashed with a violence that drove it out like a cataract. Across railroad tracks I sped, utterly heedless of approaching trains.

Twice I lost sight of his tail lights but I picked them up when he had to slow down on the narrow road because of a car in front of him. So that when we struck the Queensborough bridge leading into the city, I was only a scant half-block away.

I crossed the bridge close behind him. There were other cars with us, so he had no reason to suspect surveillance. It was the same when he ran through to Fifth avenue. But here he drew down to slow speed and started north along the asphalt.

If I'd done the same, he'd got wary at once. So I scooted across into Central Park and took the east road, from which I found it easy to keep watch on him. He went almost to the end of the street. As he turned back, I looked at my watch. It was a trifle past midnight.

At the Eighty-ninth street corner, where the big house of the banker Hamilton stands, Hawthorne stopped his car. Under the flickering electric light I could see him look over the great stone mansion. You know it. Three imposing stories on the southeast corner. Walls bare of ornamentation, except for a shallow portico at the front entrance.

He drove on after a moment, but at slow speed. The avenue was bare of vehicles, and pedestrians were few and far apart. Even the slow tread of a copper wasn't to be heard. From behind a clump of shrubbery I watched the man in the auto. My heart was pounding hard. Old intuition told me things were about to happen.

I watched him run slowly down two blocks and then turn east. He was out of sight so long that I was preparing to give chase again, when I saw him returning along Eighty-ninth street. He had driven around two squares.

At the corner he stopped again. This time he stepped out of his car and walked quite close to the Hamilton home that stood cold and dark. I could plainly see him inspect the front with keen, quick eyes. I was only a little more than a hundred yards away, with only a high iron fence separating us. I had taken the precaution to douse all my lights and to deaden my engine.

A heart-rending shriek issued from her lips.

As the great staring eyes of a limousine bore in sight from down the avenue, he leaped into his car and again drove slowly along. This time he turned at the Eighty-eighth street corner, and in a couple of minutes was in sight again. I could see his head turn east, west, north, and south, like that of a man keeping sharp watch. Once I grew hot all over as he kept his eyes riveted for a moment in my direction.

But any suspicion that he had of being watched passed, for he drew close to the curb about fifty feet beyond the Hamilton house and got out again. He stood quite still for a moment, looking about carefully. The night was silent, except for the low rumble of night traffic in the city far below us and the occasional honk of a far-off motor car. Close at hand it was graveyard-like.

In a flash he underwent transformation. Diving into the tonneau of his car, he came forth in a moment with what looked like a bundle of rope in one hand. By the other he was leading his ape Jocko.

Together they made for the Hamilton house steps. Hawthorne waved his hands above his head and I understood that he was instructing his pet. Then he leaned down, undid the bundle, placed something in the ape's mouth, lifted the beast in his arms and set it against the portico.

The animal agilely scampered to its top. Then it leaped to the sill of a window just above the roof of the portico. All the time something swayed behind it. For a moment I could not make out what it was. Then it came to me like a slap in the face. The ape had carried the end of a rope ladder aloft.

I never had the sensation of being presented with a million dollars, but I'm dead sure it wouldn't be any pleasanter than what I felt at the scene across the avenue. For I'd got the solution of the second-story robberies. Headlines two inches high in the Star floode' my mind. A "scoop" that would make the whole town ring would be chalked up to my credit. McCabe never again would dare to refuse me a little advance in my salary.

It was easy now to see how the Astorbilt, the Morgenthal, the Jenkins and the Hiscock homes had been entered and looted. Hawthorne had done it with his ape. I understood the whole thing at a glance when I beheld the man grab the bottom of the dangling rope ladder, test it to see that his trained simian had secured it properly and then slowly ascend.

He reached the top of the portico, drew some tool from his side-pocket—he had shed his overcoat—and leaned far over toward the window sill. Indistinctly I saw his hand give a prod and a jerk. Then he slowly lifted the sash. He had deftly jimmied his way into the Hamilton home.

The ape was first to disappear within the window. Hawthorne speedily followed, drawing the rope ladder after him. When I saw him dart his pocket flashlight about the room he had entered, I, panting like a hound on the leash, decided it was time to begin the round-up.

CHAPTER IX.
THE ROUND-UP.

And it was some round-up, let me tell you. I hadn't made a move, because I knew that the slightest alarm would have sent Hawthorne away and left me with no proof but my own word. I wanted to catch him red-handed. I wanted a real spectacular climax.

So, when Hawthorne and his accomplice had disappeared within the window of the Hamilton home, I decided it was time to act. I cranked my motor and sped down the park. I wanted a policeman—two policemen—and wanting them, of course I couldn't find them.

Afraid to venture too far away lest Hawthorne escape, I turned back after I had gone about ten blocks. I whistled shrilly and exploded a series of "honks" from my horn to attract aid. I shot out upon the Fifth avenue asphalt, slowing down a bit to listen for any signs of help.

It was coming, the crisply clattering feet of a running man resounding on the stone walk. In a moment I noted the helmet, the swaying night stick and the shining badge of a copper.

"Climb in and be quick about it," I called to him. "There's a second-story man at work on the Hamilton home up the street."

He fairly tumbled in beside me, and I pushed my car into high speed. But fast as I was, I wasn't quite fast enough. When still more than a block away, we saw Hawthorne clambering down the rope ladder. The ape threw the upper end loose, scrambled to the walk and was in the auto before its master, with arms filled, reached his machine.

He dumped his load into the tonneau, sprang into the chauffeur's seat and grabbed the wheel. He had left his engine throbbing so he at once moved forward. I drove my car close to his. The copper, shaking his stick with one hand and his revolver in the other, leaned across me and shouted:

"Hands up, you guy, or I'll plug you!"

But Hawthorne kept his hands down. Moreover, he shot ahead with his muffler off to hasten his speed. The cop wasn't a fast thinker. He was even a worse shot. Once—twice—thrice he fired after the retreating car, while I went ahead and backed up in the effort to get turned around. He didn't hit his target, for when I was finally straightened away for the pursuit, Hawthorne was more than two blocks in advance of us, and going at terrific speed.

"We'll get him yet," I yelled at my companion. "I know where he's bound." I was boiling mad—mad at the cop for not bringing our quarry down, mad at myself because I hadn't had the nerve to run my car in front of Hawthorne's and block his flight.

I drove the auto to fit my mood. No dare-devil speeder ever took greater chances than I did that night. We were without light on the car, too. So the cop, Flannery by name, stood up on the running board with stick extended in order to spare us any interference from the traffic squad.

Fifth avenue never saw as wild a

chase. The fugitive kept a little more than two blocks ahead of us. I did not seem able to gain an inch. I wasn't an expert chauffeur, so the way our car wobbled from side to side of the road occasionally, threatening to vault the Central Park fence or to plunge into some millionaire's drawingroom, kept my heart midway between my chest and my mouth.

I begged Flannery to fire again, but he shook his head.

"Too much traffic," he called back. "I'd hit somebody else."

"It's a wonder I didn't hit somebody else. My hair has stood on end many a time since when I recalled the way I shaved other autos in that drive. The flying car ahead of us would attract their attention, and before their eyes were clear of that, my black, unlighted machine would be upon them. They'd squirm, and then I'm squirm, and we'd miss ramming each other. But for the life of me I can't understand how I missed piling up half a dozen wrecks on the road.

Just before we struck the full glare of the lights in front of the Plaza, Hawthorne turned east into a side street. I wasn't alarmed at the prospect of missing him. I'd resolved that I'd follow clear out to that high-hedged home on Long Island before I'd give up the chase. I turned after him. We struck a rough cobble pavement that forced me to slow up a bit.

Hawthorne was out of sight. He'd evidently turned the first corner, but I was certain he was bound for the Queensborough bridge, so I kept humping along toward it. Flannery wanted to stop to pick up some aid, but I shook my head against it. The few cops that we passed stared at us in a sort of threatening surprise, but did not molest us when they saw Flannery making a singal apparatus of himself on the running board.

I knew I was right about Hawthorne's destination. When we reached the bridge entrance, I saw his car nearly at the top of the long incline. He was still whizzing, regardless of the speed limit of fifteen miles an hour. So we whizzed, too, but we gained no ground.

As he passed beneath a glaring pair of arc lights I saw the head of his ape bob out at the side of his auto. I was too far away to note the glare of its wicked eyes, but it was no time for hunting beasts. We were after a man.

Yet we made no gain. I was driving with all the abandon of a crazy man. Hawthorne was doing the same. As I bounded off the bridge incline that leads into the motor boulevard, I saw him disappearing beyond a curve, but I was in sight of his tail lights again shortly.

Thus, in a sort of hide-and-seek game, the chase went on. Flannery had dropped into the seat beside me.

"Do you know where you're goin'?" he yelled at me.

"I know where I'm going," I shot back, sharply. I didn't intend that any common cop should question my plans.

"Well, I'll be blamed if I do!" he roared.

"You don't need to," I blurted.

We left the asphalt boulevard and struck the macadam road. From that we bounded off into the mud. To my dismay I found that here Hawthorne was slowly gaining on us. Not much, but enough to give him a chance to hide.

"Flannery, you're a blamed poor shot," I bawled him out, "but try and see if you can't stop this guy ahead by putting a hole in one of his tires."

"You can't take no aim with this machine bobbing about like a cork in a rough sea," answered the cop. "I'm as like to put a hole through the man's head as through his tires."

"All right; aim at his head and you'll be sure hit a tire."

Whereat Flannery, in a huff, drew his gun and taking advantage of a smooth spot in the road, popped once—twice at the car ahead. He missed his mark. Worse than that, he drew a return fire. In the darkness—for we had now got beyond the city's street lights—I saw the flash of a weapon ahead.

Once—twice—thrice the flame spat, and the crack of gun fire came back to us. Past my ear I heard the whiz of a bullet. Then from beneath us came a sharp report and a sudden slowing of our machine. The rascal's random shot had punctured a forward tire. We were out of the race, temporarily at least.

But I wasn't giving up. I hopped out, lit a lamp and proceeded to strip off the injured tire. Flannery helped—in a way. I never new a cop yet that knew anything much about anything but pounding a beat. Somehow we got the punctured tube off and a reserve one on. It took the breath of both of us to pump it up. Chill as the night was, I was in a hot sweat. I was afraid Hawthorne was going to get away after all.

We started on, but at reduced speed. I couldn't see or hear a thing ahead. The pursuit was getting on my nerves. I began to hunt around for an excuse to put the blame on Flannery. And then we hove in sight of the Hawthorne home—dark and bleak as usual. I stopped long before we reached it and hopped out of the machine.

"You wait here, Flannery," I ordered. "I'm going to sneak up on the house."

Revolver in hand, I sneaked along the roadside and up into the protection of the high hedge. As I reached the auto entrance, I beheld back among the trees in the rear yard a figure in white. It was moving ghostlike and slowly from the house. The face was away from me, but I was sure the figure was that of a woman. She appeared to be bearing a load in her arms.

I crept within the broad yard and in the shadow of tree trunks slowly advanced on the figure. I reached within about thirty feet and then paused, as, in a sudden slit of moonlight from the black sky, I beheld the white-robed figure stoop down at the foot of a great gnarled tree that rose close to the fence and deposit within a rotted hole the burden of her arms. Then as she rose I saw her face.

CHAPTER X.
CASHING IN.

She was Hawthorne's daughter, but in her eyes there was not even the dull, vacant expression I had beheld in them when, a prisoner in the treasure room, I had seen her through a slit in the trapdoor. No, her eyes were glazed, almost deathlike in their sepulchral set. Then it came down on me like a ton of brick. The woman was walking in her sleep.

Swerving neither to right nor left, she went back to the rear door of the house and disappeared within. Then, you bet, I got busy. I hadn't disturbed her, because somewhere I'd heard that a somnambulist, suddenly awakened, is likely to suffer from the shock. But when I saw the door close behind her, I crawled across the soggy ground to the foot of the tree she had visited and thrust my hand within the hole.

I struck something first off. It felt familiar, so familiar, that my heart started rising in my throat again. That heart of mine had got to be like the mercury in a thermometer. I dared, in my excitement, to scratch a match. My sight vindicated my touch. There, pressed deep into the cavity of the tree's trunk lay five bags of old Hawthorne's gold.

The discovery straightened me up like a crack in the jaw. Gertrude Hawthorne was right, then, in telling the grocer's boy in Bellrose that somebody had robbed her father of thousands of dollars in gold. But she'd omitted the very vital point—which she didn't know herself—that she had been the supposed thief.

And another thing dawned on me. Of course, old Hawthorne hadn't reported his losses to the police. They were part of his stolen loot. A word about them would have brought down the law upon him.

In a pant now, I scurried up to the garage, but it was empty. That was a surprise. Hawthorne could not have yet reached home. To make sure, I circled the house for a sign of a light or sound of a voice! There was neither. Puzzled a bit, I went back to Flannery.

"He's not home yet," I said. "We're likely to have a bit of a scrap before we get him yet."

The copper jerked an ear up and listened intently. I imitated his action.

"D'you hear anything?" he whispered after a moment.

"Like a groan, isn't it?" I muttered back.

"Close by, too."

Together we floundered back through the mud. It was black now as the bottomless pit. But the sound, more and more like an agonized moan, grew more and more distinct. We felt our way fairly to a crossroad leading farther up the hill. We entered it. Then we started into a run. For not more than one hundred feet away, piled up in wreckage against the trunk of a gigantic roadside tree lay a heavy automobile, lit up by the flickering remnant of one of its smashed lamps. Flannery, aiming his pocket flashlight, bared the rotten sight. Hawthorne, smeared horribly from a crimson stream that still gushed from a wound in his neck, lay back on his seat. His cheeks were a grayish-white, his eyes, when they slowly opened as we came close, were glassy. But they flashed just a trifle when he saw Flannery's shield.

"Got me, didn't you—at last?" I reached over to hear his livid lips mutter.

"But why this wreck?" I asked.

"Don't you see you plunked me?" There was a shade of anger in his thin voice. "I got no weak—I couldn't steer. I tried to make this road—I forgot about this tree." He ended with a little sigh and closed his eyes wearily.

When I reached over to straighten him up, there was a snarl from his feet and the ape, leaping to his side, threatened me with glistening teeth and glaring eyes. The scars on my throat and neck and shoulders swelled and smarted.

"Bat him one good—for me, Flannery," I urged.

I gloated secretly as I heard the cop's stick come down with a crash on the simian skull. Jocko sprang for his assailant and landed upon his shoulders. You bet, I lost no time right then in drawing my automatic and poking its nose close to the neck of the ape. I fired twice and the beast, snarling in death, fell limply into the roadway.

As gently as we could we carried Hawthorne to my car an drove slowly down the road and into his yard. He was too weak to speak and the jolt of the short ride had started his wound to bleeding more profusely.

I found the key to the rear door in one of his pockets, along with a couple of strands of beautiful pearls and some massive diamond rings—the booty from his night's work—and let us in. We stretched him out on a couch in the diningroom. He moved his fingers spasmodically as if to call me to his side.

Under the gaslight I kneeled down and leaned over him.

"I'm—cashing in," he whispered, so faintly I could barely make out the words. Then they came more strongly as if some inward wrench had torn them loose: "But—my poor—child."

As he spoke I was aware of a new presence in the room. I looked up and just beyond, framed in the door, stood the figure that but a little while ago I had seen in flowing white night robes in the cold outside air.

Hawthorne's daughter was gazing down at her father with a new expression. As her eyes took in the shamble, color came to her pale cheeks and horror crept into her face. The old, vacant, murky look disappeared. Her mouth opened, and a long, heart-rending shriek issued forth. Then her arms threshed wildly above her head, and she fell headlong to the floor. I lifted her and carried her to an adjoining room. There was full intelligence in her eyes when they reopened.

"Mother, mother!" she breathed softly. "Dear mother!"

I went back to Hawthorne, starting Flannery off to Bellrose for a doctor. Then I leaned over the second-story man again and said:

"Your daughter is calling for her mother."

A spasm of pain contorted his ghastly face. Then his lips quivered:

"I know—I know. It drove—her crazy. I—I—killed—her—mother."

I thought he'd stopped breathing then. His eyes were quite glassy. I poured a bit of liquor from the sideboard through his lips. It revived him enough to enable him to gasp:

"I didn't—mean to. I just struck her when she threat—ened to peach."

He quivered a bit and panted freely. Then he whispered:

"She's buried—out under—the old tree against—the fence."

"The one with the hole in the trunk?" I asked quickly.

His eyes opened and closed in a feeble "Yes."

I gripped myself hard. If gray matter can seethe, mine did at the situation. The poor, crazy girl hiding her father's stolen gold above the grave of her murdered mother! Did you ever read anything as strange as that in your story books?

But in my stress I didn't forget that I was a newspaper reporter. I was still shy of a complete explanation. So I bent over and asked him gently:

"Why did you always pick out Friday night to do this trick?"

His throat moved convulsively before he was able to frame any response. Then I could just hear:

"She—died—Friday." After a long pause: "Had to have—excitement—to help—forget."

He tried to cough but was too weak. I knew well enough what was the matter with him. The blood from his wound was filling his throat and choking him to death. His cheeks grew livid, his fingers clutched vaildly at me as if for help, his eyes protruded wildly. I never again want to see the agony that face held as he heaved his chest and gurgled faintly:

"My—my—poor—poor—child!"

I waited on my knees helpless beside him as he lived another contorted moment. Then I unfolded a napkin from the table and spread it over his agonized face. The Second-story Genius was dead.

Half an hour elapsed before the doctor arrived. I explained things briefly to him before he went in and looked at the prone and sobbing figure of the daughter. I couldn't go near her, I felt that sorry. He asked her a few questions. She answered rationally enough. Her replies also showed that from the hour in which she had been shocked into insanity at the sight of her mother's death she had had no impression of passing events.

"I shouldn't be a bit surprised," said the pill man to me, as he helped himself to a stiff drink out of the decanter on the sideboard, after looking at the face of the dead man, "if the same kind of a shock had brought her back to her senses. Strange? Sure, but altogether reasonable. She'll be perfectly normal, I think, after a good rest."

I looked at my watch. It lacked twenty minutes of two. I pushed down to the village and dragged the druggist from bed to get the use of his telephone.

"McCabe," I said—and for all I tried I couldn't keep the jump of excitement out of my voice—"give me a man to take this story for the next edition. I've rounded up the Second-Story Man."

"What?" and I believe he'd have kissed me if I'd been near enough.

And when I saw the big page-wide headlines in the Star that morning with my own name in big fat black type over the story, do you know, kid, I was rather proud of my scars after all.

The End.

ON A DEAD CHILD

Richard Middleton in "Poems and Songs."

Man proposes, God in His time disposes,
And so I wandered up to where you lay,
A little rose among the little roses,
And no more dead than they.

It seemed your childish feet were tired of straying,
You did not greet me from your flower-strewn bed,
Yet still I knew that you were only playing—
Playing at being dead.

I might have thought that you were really sleeping,
So quiet lay your eyelids to the sky,
So still your hair, but surely you were peeping,
And so I did not cry.

God knows, and in His proper time disposes,
And so I smiled and gently called your name.
Added my rose to your sweet heap of roses,
And left you to your game.

Trouble in the Pie Belt.

In the course of some light-hearted comment on the decision of the authorities of a woman's college in Western Massachusetts to banish pie from the girl's midday meal the following incident of an earlier day in a neighboring region was recalled:

Some twenty years ago a New York contractor was employed to build a fine country house in the Berkshire Hills. The laborers, who were recruited from the neighboring villages, were boarded at near-by farmhouses. Before long they all went out on strike. The superintendent in charge was powerless. The contractor hurriedly took an express train for the Berkshires, and on arriving, immediately demanded an interview with the leaders of the strike.

"What's the matter?" he demanded. "What's your grievance?"

"We're underfed," said the spokesman. "You can't expect us to work on empty stomachs. The company has got us here. It ought to see that we are decently fed."

"The company pays enough to have you properly fed," said the builder. "What is the trouble?"

"We don't get pie but once a day," said the spokesman.

"Abominable!" agreed the builder. "You shall have pie three times a day." And they did, and there was an end of that strike.

Why He Lost.

A political office in a small town was vacant. The office paid $250 a year, and there was keen competition for it. One of the candidates, Ezekiel Hicks, was a shrewd old fellow, and a neat campaign fund was turned over to him. To the astonishment of all, however, he was defeated. "I can't account for it," said one of the leaders of Hicks' party, gloomily. "With that money we should have won. How did you lay it out, Ezekiel?" "Well," said Ezekiel, slowly pulling his whiskers, "yer see, that office only pays $250 a year salary, an' I didn't see no sense in paying $900 out to get the office, so I bought a little truck farm instead."

A Mock Marriage

Or, LOVE'S IDIOSYNCRASIES

By ELLA MARTIN

"Rumor is nearly always wrong."

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CHAPTER IX.

THE PORTRAIT.

FOR an instant the astonishment he felt held Glen Alden rooted to the spot. The flowering vine covering one end of the piazza formed a nook shady and cool; just the place for a tete-a-tete. And like a pair of lovers they looked—Gloria Bennett and Max Folsom, while Glen stood and stared at them. Gloria saw him pause and hesitate about coming forward, and her face paled, then suddenly crimsoned to the roots of her lustrous black hair. Her dark eyes shone like stars in the night sky as she regarded him; then her voice, low and musically sweet, bade him come to her.

Max rose to withdraw as Glen took the beautiful white hand and bowed low before her, but Gloria requested him to resume his seat, and then the two men shook hands.

"It is a surprise to find you here," Glen said, as he took the seat she indicated.

"It is my fortune," Gloria replied, laughingly, "I followed it here, as I was advised. What it is to be, I do not know yet; but I was to meet my fate here, so the fortune-teller informed me. I had little faith in her ability to read the future, but I decided to leave home for a time, and here is as good a place as any to hide one's self in."

"Hardly," Glen said with a smile. "It seems to me the whole of Chicago has come to this particular part of the Adirondacks since my advent in the place."

For the first time Max spoke.

"I have met a number of old friends from there," he said, "but not enough to make much difference with the population of that city, I fancy." Whereupon they all laughed.

Gloria was herself again by this time, and if Glen's presence embarrassed or annoyed her the fact was not evident. She asked no questions concerning his business in this place, nor did she mention her sister's name. He thought she must understand his feelings, since she ignored the past so entirely. He was not overly sentimental, but he believed she must have known of his preference for her, but, like himself, she regarded his marriage with Lillith as a barrier between them forever. Yes, forever! He had given up all thoughts of her as a sweetheart, and he believd she had done likewise. Therefore, there was no reason why they might not be friends. He felt no pang of jealousy on his own account, though he could not help noting that Max Folsom was very attentive to her, but he remembered Fern and her interests.

And now it occurred to him to ask the question he had longed, but had not dared, to put to Jim Collier, lest the latter should mistrust his interest in the subject and divine the reason for it. Max was acquainted with Jim. What more natural than that he could tell him the name of the cousin whose identity he was so anxious to learn.

"By the way," he said, offhandedly, in an effort to to conceal his real interest, "Jim Collier bunked with us the other night. Why didn't you stop on your way down? You know Jim, of course?"

Max looked at the speaker with searching eyes, the vague suspicion he had been nursing growing r ore nearly a certainty on the fresh evidence thus supplied.

"Why didn't I stop at your camp, you mean? Where were you camped?"

It was Glen's turn to regard his questioner with searching gaze. Was he really in ignorance of what he asked; or merely pretending not to have passed their encampment?

"I thought you passed us on your way back to the hotel. Your dog made us a call."

"My dog," said Max, evasively, "travels three miles to my one. He doubtless smelled the remains of your supper."

Evidently, if Max had passed their tent, he did not care to say so, and it would be just as well not to press him to the denial he was evading.

"You know Jim's cousin—what's his name?" as if waiting for Max to supply the name—another way of bombarding the fortress.

"Jim has several cousins, I believe," replied the defense, laconically, without added information.

All the while Max's level gaze told the other that he knew his hand and wondered what card he would play next, and yet Glen was puzzled. He could not quite understand why, if Max had passed their camp, he should wish to conceal the fact; nor why he the same as refused to reveal the name he was seeking to discover. But he had to doubt that it was so, and therefore he desisted. Gloria, seeing the situation, interrupted at this point, and soon all went to dinner.

Later, Gloria and Glen met in the common parlor. The other guests were out on the verandas enjoying the balmy air and the moonlight, and they were alone for the time. They faced each other with embarrassment. Then Gloria spoke.

"How is it all to end?" she asked. "Why did you do it if you could not abide by it?"

"For a reason somewhat resembling her own," he answered. "You know it was a match of our parents' making. There was no love on either side."

For a second Gloria stood with compressed lips, undecided. Then she said: "You are mistaken. Lillith loved you from the first. It is true she was prejudiced in your favor by mother's praises of you, but she loved you, and believed you wooed her because you returned her love. The shock her affections received when she learned her mistake changed her feelings toward you entirely. But for that I would not tell you this. She will seek her freedom through the divorce courts."

Glen started. The very thing his father abhorred was to come to him then? And yet his father was more to be blamed than he.

"Do you know who has been paying her attention in your absence?" Gloria's voice brought him back to the present with a shock.

"No," he replied, and his voice was husky. He did not ask who it was. He knew that he had forfeited the right to question; but he wanted to know, nevertheless.

"Max Folsom!"

She had not waited for him to ask for information. She volunteered it, and the two words that formed the name dropped from her lips weighted with emphasis. Glen suppressed an exclamation of surprise. He tried to feign indifference, but his countenance expressed consternation. The fear was for his sister Fern.

Gloria rose to her feet and went near him, her dark, fathomless eyes fixed on his flushed face. Her movements were graceful and stately. He was thinking of that, and admiring the contour of her throat, the poise of her head, with its crown of dusky hair, her midnight eyes, as he watched her approach. He had forgotten both Lillith and his sister, and he started visibly when she placed her hand ever so lightly upon his arm.

"You can win her away from him, if you try," she whispered. "Go back and make your peace with her. Promise!"

For a space he did not answer. He wondered at her plea. Was it for her sister's sake, she asked it, or her own? Was she in love with Max herself, and seeking in this way to make impossible a union between the two? Max had just left her side a few moments before. His impression when he first beheld them together led him to believe they were lovers. They had appeared completely absorbed in each other. A pang of jealousy shot through his heart at the remembrance. Was it on Fern's account or his own? He could not have answered that just then. The witching spell of this woman's presence was upon him. Later, he knew. It was then he made a final decision. He would go back to the girl he had married, as Gloria had requested. He would be true to his sentiments, live up to his own standard, and he would force his heart to obey him. He had the same as deserted the woman he had made his wife; but he would be true so far as another woman was concerned. So he shook himself free from the thraldom of her personality.

"Promise!" Gloria repeated.

"If I return to Lillith," he said, "I want a promise from you also, that you will not encourage Max Folsom's suit."

Instantly she drew back and her hand slipped from his arm. Her eyes flashed a look of reproof into his own. Had she misunderstood his motive, or did he fail to understand the reason for that look?

"Listen!" she said. "Once I loved a man—my mother came between us. But for his sake I will wed no other."

Glen's countenance clouded. Then she had never loved him. For, of course, he thought, he was not the man she had reference to. Some one else had awakened her heart, before he ever met her, probably.

"It is for another's sake I ask you not to encourage Max," he explained.

"For my sister's good I shall endeavor to keep Mr. Folsom from going back to Chicago," she said; "and rather than see her drag her name through the divorce courts I will win him from her and marry him myself, if it be possible."

"I will go back, but if she refuses to forgive me, what then?"

"I fear she will refuse—I am almost sure she will. It is too late now to make your peace with her! Why did you do it? Oh, why?"

He did not answer. He could not say it was for love of her; he had believed she knew that. And while he stood there in dazed silence, unable to give the real reason or to concoct a spurious one, she turned and quitted the room. He waited until she had had time to reach her room, then he ascended the stairs to his own apartment. On his way he was obliged to pass that of Max Folsom. The door of this room was ajar, and unthinkingly he glanced in, only to start back, his fists clenching themselves spasmodically. On a dresser in full view stood a portrait of Lillith Alden—his wife!

He was about to enter and take the picture from its place and tear it to atoms, when he heard footsteps behind him. He turned and faced Max Folsom.

"How came you with that picture?" Glen demanded fiercely, pointing to the portrait.

The suppressed anger in his voice aroused Max's ire.

"It was given to me by the original," he replied, coolly. "But let me add it was not until your desertion of the lady, and your sister's rejection of me. Neither of you has a right to object to our friendship."

"Oh, there is no objection," Glen said, with a faint sneer. "Only, it seems you were both quickly and quickly consoled. Keep the portrait, by all means, if you care for the picture of another man's wife in your room."

"Your wife! You call her your wife? Well, if you want my opinion, I should say that it was merely another mock marriage."

Max watched Glen's face covertly, and saw that the other observed it. There is no use hiding one's motive when convinced that the other knows what the motive is and is also aware of the endeavor to hide it. So Max made a sudden decision that it was best to be frank.

"See here, Glen, I did pass your camp that night, and it was because I overheard your conversation with Jim Collier that I changed my mind about calling on you. You can guess the rest. Now tell me, who was the bride in that mock marriage at the girls' club?"

As has been stated, Glen Alden, though an intelligent young man, was not a remarkably clever one, and he did not guess the rest; but he was sharp enough to be cautious, and he guarded Fern's secret. That Max mistrusted it, and was endeavoring to verify his suspicions was evident to him, and he determined if he ever learned the truth it must be from his sister's own lips. When he succeeded in finding Jim's cousin, whoever he might be, and with his corroboration, free them both from the technicalities that bound them, then it might be well for Fern to confess, provided Max should ever again seek her hand in marriage. So he replied in a way to evade imparting information without denying that he was able to give it.

"See here, Glen," Max cried, and caught him by the shoulders, "tell me who was the bride of that eventful night!"

"Some man in a woman's apparel, as I understand it," evaded the young man.

"Why did you do it?"

"The real bride, then—you know what I mean. Tell me. I have a right to know!"

A right! Glen Alden started and turned pale! Max must mistrust then that it was Fern! He drew himself from his companion's hold and turned toward his room. He must escape further questioning; he was not holding his own; he was too inexperienced in the art of dissembling.

"I will answer you," he said, distinctly, and with emphasis, "when you have revealed to me the name of the real bridegroom!"

CHAPTER X.

THE PLAN.

Down the leafy path a short distance from the hotel Gloria Bennett strolled by herself on the afternoon of a day in June. The air was balmy, and filled with the scent of pines. She wore no hat, but carried a sunshade in one slim white hand. The path she followed was shady and cool, and she had little use for the umbrella as a protection from the weather. At last she sat down on a log by the wayside and at once fell into a reverie.

She made a picture that would please the eye of an artist, as she sat there with her dreamy black eyes fixed upon the wildwood scenery.

"What a charming place to live in!" she murmured wistfully, "if one were only happy. The fragrant pines, the lakes of silvery smoothness, and shores inviting strolls by moonlight afford most any one pleasure. But here in the midst of crowds I am alone!"

But Gloria knew, none better than she, that it was her fault if she was much by herself; she had repeatedly refused invitations of all kinds, and had even maneuvered for this walk by herself. She had come out here to think, and to try to understand her own heart. She had tried to like Max Folsom well enough to win him, for her sister's sake only, but that very morning Max had bidden her a hasty farewell, and left for Chicago, his face brighter than usual, and his mind anywhere but on the fact that he might, by remaining, enjoy her society the whole summer long. And she was reluctant to see him go, for her sister's welfare only.

Well, perhaps it was best, if they loved each other, that they should find happiness together, even via the divorce court. And if Glen never went back, if he and Lillith never met, that, too, were best, if they could not care for each other. But why need it ever have happened? Why had they ever married, and by so doing spoiled the happiness of three lives? Her own had been drawn into the vortex of mistakes.

But was her fancy for Glen Alden—wrecked by the marriage with her sister—in reality the cause of her unhappiness? Was it that, or the old love—the dead love—that had clouded existence for her? Today in the heart of the wood, in the solitude of Nature, she felt the

spell of the past. One there was in the "long ago" who had filled her life, but from whom she was estranged. She had forgotten that old love, or, at least, she had meant to forget. In the whirl of social pleasure following their introduction to friends of the Alden family, she had pressed back the memory of that face, because she had striven for that end. But here, alone with her own thoughts, as she had been of late, the old longing, the yearning for his presence returned to her.

"What use to strive for forgetfulness?" she whispered, "the memory of him is better than the real presence of any other man. And but for mother we would not be parted.

"I ought to forgive her and go home," she added, bringing herself back from thoughts of the past with an effort. "I must have caused her lots of worry; but I was reckless of everything when I left. She has my good at heart, I suppose, but she is only making us all miserable. She was different before we inherited this wealth. She has made the possession of riches obnoxious to her children. I am afraid her plunge into society has had a dash of cold water thrown onto it by the way Lillith's marriage has turned out. And I presume my flight has awakened her from thoughts of social progress, but it was the fortune-teller's fault, mostly."

She threw back her head and laughed softly, her white, even teeth showing like pearls between her scarlet lips.

"I wonder why she supposed I would find my fortune here! I guess, by the way, she didn't know what she was talking about; for I have not found it, nor am I likely to. But how strange that she should send me straight into the presence of Glen Alden—now, when it is forever too late! Something—some intangible something—has gone from my feelings toward him. Is it because he married another? No matter; it has gone never to return. But if mother and Lillith knew we were here together they would believe we had eloped, and nothing could keep Lillith from seeking a divorce.

"I must go home!" she cried, on thinking of all the things that might happen on account of her absence with whereabouts unknown. "Max will mention my being here, not knowing of their ignorance of it, I must go at once, before they find it out and misconstrue the reason."

She started to her feet just as Glen Alden came up the path leading from the lake. He was carrying a fishing-rod in one hand and a string of fish in the other. Unlike the other men, whose acquaintance she had made during her short stay at the inn, Glen had never asked her to accompany him on any of his excursions on the lakes, although he was her brother-in-law. She, in her woman's heart, felt that she knew the reason why. She and Glen might have loved each other under different circumstances; but now even friendship between them was undesirable. Everything was spoiled by an adverse Fate. There was always that restraint between them because each guessed at the other's feelings. It were better if they had not met again, but what could not have been avoided could now be remedied. She would go tomorrow and leave him to enjoy the sports he found so entertaining.

But since she had seen him coming up the path she would wait and walk the rest of the way with him.

"I think it best to tell you," she said to him, after a word or two of greeting, "that Max left for Chicago early this morning. I am about to return also. I mean to protect my sister—to save her from her own folly, I need be. If Max has returned on her account, then——"

"Then I will protect her!" spoke Glen Alden, a newly-acquired dignity that well became him in the eyes of Gloria Bennett. "You shan't sacrifice yourself for such a purpose! I myself will return and protect my wife!"

They looked at each other awkwardly for a moment; then Gloria's gaze wandered to the scenery in the background; and Glen looked down at the string of fish he was carrying—too many for the basket that hung from his shoulder. She smiled when she divined the trend of his thoughts. How boyish he seemed, and yet he was as old as James, her lover of long ago. Not so long ago in years, but it seemed an age since she had seen him last. He was different—so different from the man beside her—all devotion and protestations of love, indifferent to everything but her charms.

"You can come back again," she said understanding his unwillingness to leave the sports that pleased him, "with your bride. This will be a delightful place in which to spend your honeymoon." She waited to see how he would receive her suggestion; then, as he stood thoughtfully regarding the ground without replying, she added. "You could return here and leave Max Folsom behind."

"Yes," he agreed, brightening, "she must be got away from Max at all hazards. But," he added, "she will not come—unless you help me. She will refuse to have anything to do with me. We must use strategy. Will you help me?"

He asked it hesitatingly, as if he feared refusal.

"What can I do to help you? I am about to return, myself, you know."

"You must not," he replied, quickly, with a startled look. "You have agreed to let Max Folsom alone!"

Gloria could not comprehend why he should want to keep them both away from Max, until he confided to her that Max Folsom was his sister's lover from whom she was at present estranged. Then Gloria laughed.

"And you think one of us is as likely to win him as the other," she cried; "a case of a heart being caught on the rebound! Well, as for me, I am interested only so far as it affects my sister's welfare. If they should marry, it would be simply for spite, and it would spite no one so much as themselves. I presume Max paid court to Lillith hoping Fern would hear of it, and call him back again. And I am sure my sister received his attentions merely to show the world she did not care for the man who——"

"Don't," he said, with a gesture which showed he did not care to hear the word "deserted" applied to the case.

"But," she went on, leaving the obnoxious word unspoken, "what we fear cannot be prevented, so let us take no means to prevent it, no matter what their reason. And it is quite possible they may become fond of each other and defy us, if we remain idle."

"Then let us act at once. Send her a telegram to come to you, Gloria. That is the best plan. Tell her you need her, and will explain afterward. I will go back and accompany her here, unknown to her. I will find some way to make my peace with her, once she is here where I can see her."

He was thinking that Max must go back to his old allegiance, if separated from his new charmer. Circumstances had forced him to live up to the vows he had made. He should have known better than to try to shirk his marital duties in the first place.

"You will the same as abduct your bride, by means of a decoy telegram?" Gloria remarked. "I will aid you, since the case seems to warrant it; but if she has learned from Max that you are here also, she will not come—she will suspect a plot. Then there is the danger of mother finding out her intention and preventing her departure."

"We can try; it is the only plan I can think of. She would not receive me if I went to her home. If we fail, I will go to your mother and boldly claim my bride. Anything to put a stop to further gossip."

It was only for Fern's sake, Gloria thought, a little resentfully—neither she no Lillith figured much in his thoughts. But she sent the telegram as soon as Glen had had time to reach Chicago.

It was a surprise to his associates when Glen Alden walked into his club one night, cool as he had ever been, left town city. He had previously visited his home, smoothed matters over with his father the best he could; had interviewed his sister—or, rather, been interviewed by her, and had told her all the truth.

And now he was obliged to answer the eager questioning of his chums. Yes, he told them, he had been called suddenly to New York City; he had been putting up at the Hotel Endicott, but as no word from home had reached him lately, he had returned to find that his letters had miscarried. However, as business would keep him in the East for some time yet, he would take his bride back with him. Not a word about having been in the Adirondacks.

"Of course, my wife," (how glibly he handled that word) "preferred to stay with her mother during my absence rather than at my father's house," he further explained.

"But rumor said——" ventured one.

"Rumor is nearly always wrong, my dear fellow," replied Glen, cheerfully. "Well I must be going. Just dropped in to see you all a moment. So long!" And Glen went out as abruptly as he had entered.

"There!" he muttered, when once more upon the street he stood waiting for a car, "that will set gossip adrift in another direction. I don't suppose they will believe it, but they will repeat it whenever occasion arises. And once I get a chance to talk to Lillith I may be able to convince her that people believe she returned to the East with me.

"By the way, what is the matter with beginning early, and lying to her as a married man is supposed to lie to his wife? It might be I could make her believe I was not to blame for not returning sooner."

But Glen did not have faith enough in his ability to deceive to present himself at the Bennett home and put his theory into practice. Instead, he kept watch at the station until he saw Lillith board an Eastbound train, and then put his first plan into execution.

It chanced that Mrs. Bennett was in Milwaukee for a few days at the time the telegram came. She and Lillith had had a stormy scene just before her departure, and the cause of the disagreement was Max Folsom. Mrs. Bennett was a practical woman. Once she had been sentimental, but the sentiments of her youth were long since outgrown.

"I hear Mr. Folsom has returned to town," she had remarked, as she was preparing to go away. "Now, I hope you will not give cause for further remark by continuing to receive his attention. It was my ambition to see you and your sister received into the best society, and that without a blemish on your fair name. You had everything heart could wish, and might have fulfilled my expectations. But what do I have to contend with? Here, you have not only left your husband's home, and thereby published to the world his desertion of you, but you have openly received attentions from your sister-in-law's fiance."

Lillith's eyes were blazing. She had grown willful of late, and was ever ready to assume the defensive.

"And you would have me play the part of a forlorn and deserted wife, I suppose? Max and I understand each other; we are friends. But I would maintain the intimacy you deprecate, before the world, even if I detested him. I will show people I have not broken my heart over the man who deserted me."

"Lillith Alden! I am ashamed of you!"

"Lillith Bennett, if you please, mamma! I will not acknowledge that his name belongs to me. Why, oh, why, when you knew he and Gloria loved each other, did you not let them marry? His father requested it of you in Glen's behalf, and Gloria pleaded with you—but you would not listen."

"I had a reason for refusing—a very good reason."

"That is it; you always have reasons! But you 'very good reason' you never explain to your daughters."

"My daughters should trust to my judgment. But see what Gloria has done! Taken French leave from her own home, and but for my ready explanations would have set tongues to wagging by her precipitious departure. And she has not written us a line! She has not considered our feelings a particle! I worry every minute!"

The fresh, smooth skin of the woman did not betray signs of worry. But her gray hair she would have looked nearly as young as her daughters.

"We trusted to your judgment," Lillith answered bitterly, "and see what it has done for us!"

"But see here, child! You must cease drawing people's attention by your unseemly conduct! I insist! Have you no pride?"

"It is because I have pride that I seek to hide my humiliation by what you please to term flirtations. If Mr. Alden did not find me worth while, there are those who enjoy my society."

"You will come to your senses some day, I hope, and so will Gloria; but it seems it will not be until you have disgraced yourself and me."

"There is one thing I can do before you are further disgraced—I can follow Gloria's example and efface myself. I want to get away from it all, and if you should find me gone on your return, you may know that I also have returned to the East. You may explain my absence to your newmade friends, whose opinion you think so much of, by saying that I have joined my husband—wherever he is."

There was a stress of sarcasm on the word "husband."

"But I shall do better than Gloria, I shall write and inform you as to my health every so often. I have had the experience of knowing what it is to be without news, or a knowledge of the whereabouts of the absent one."

"I trust your sister will do so soon," her mother said, with a sigh. "She cannot know how nearly distracted I am, or she would either return or write. I always had to let her get over her pet before I could do anything with her. She is like her father was. She acted just so when I broke up that affair of hers with James, but it was for her own good. The passion called love is possessed of so many idiosyncrasies, one never knows what to expect of Cupid's victims. Where are my gloves? Ah, here they are on the dresser where I laid them myself. Now, Lillith, do be good while I am away. I have business to attend to, and may be gone three or four days."

The two were in Mrs. Bennett's dressingroom, and that lady was attired in a traveling suit of soft gray cloth. She had dismissed her maid before the conversation took place. Now she turned to her daughter and kissed her on the cheek.

"Do go over and see Fern," she said at parting; "you know she would be glad to have you visit her. For the looks of it you should be on good terms with your husband's people." She was ignoring her daughter's threat to follow Gloria's example and return to her old home.

Lillith did not reply at once. She was wondering why Max, if he was in the city, had not called upon her. When she did speak she said:

"Fancy my being on good terms with Fern Alden while receiving visits from her lover! I have no grudge against Glen's father and sister, except that they both knew what he intended to do, and neither tried to prevent it. Fern Alden made no effort to influence my husband to remain with me. Why need I care if the man she loves chooses to linger by my side, or to pay court to me at social functions?"

"Child, you used not to have a resentful disposition. What has changed you so?"

"The treatment I have received from those whom I trusted," she flashed.

Mrs. Bennett could make no reply to this. If she had any regrets she hid the fact in her own breast, and waving her daughter a good-by she went from the room and down the broad staircase to the waiting automobile. Lillith watched her from the window above, and as soon as the automobile was out of sight she threw herself onto a couch and burst into a passion of tears. They were tears of anger and mortification; and, though she would not own it, of grief as well. The dusk of evening was creeping into the room when she glanced up. She arose and donned a long cloak, after which she wrapped a scarf about her head.

"I will go to the fortune-teller's," she said, "and learn, if I can, what my fortune is to be."

She walked the few blocks to the place where the gypsy had her den. She was obliged to wait in the outer room till the hour when the gypsy assumed her throne. Lillith wondered if she wandered about the streets telling fortunes, except during regular office hours, which with her never began until nine in the evening. She must be an Egyptian, though not a nomad, she decided.

At last, when she was shown into the gypsy's presence, she was trembling with excitement. She had never believed in the ability of any one to foretell future events; she should not believe what was revealed to her now, probably. But out of her unrest had grown the desire to consult some one; and from whom else could she seek advice?

"Give me your hand, lady," mumbled the old hag, as Lillith placed in her palm the required coin. "What is it you want—your past told, or your future revealed?"

"Both. If you tell my past correctly, I shall have more faith in what you foretell about the future."

"To begin with, you are a married woman," began the masked and scarlet-draped figure, whom the reader has met with before, "but you are not happy, and you know nothing about where your husband is keeping himself. Yet you love him."

Lillith jerked her hand away, as a contradiction of that last statement. But she immediately regained her self-possession, and reaching forth her hand again, murmured:

"Go on! What is my future to be?"

"As revealed in your palm, your future life is to be bright, and free from all troubles. There is one who pays court to you now—or did, but—well, for the rest of it you must make a trip to the Adirondack Mountains. You will find the beginning of the end there. I can tell you no more."

Lillith, feeling the gypsy's claim to a knowledge of palmistry was more or less a fraud, took her hand away, and withdrew from the room without a word. It as very little that had been told her, but more would have been a trumped-up story, without doubt. However, she had barely reached home when her sister's telegram was brought to her. Its import threw her into a flutter of apprehension. What had happened to Gloria that she should send for her?

"Strange!" she murmured, after she had regained her composure somewhat. "Strange, that her message should come from the very place the gypsy advised me to go! And the advice is not yet an hour old! She may be right, after all; my fortune may lie right there in the Adirondack Mountains. But how does the gypsy know? How can she even guess?"

This extremely interesting story will be continued in next week's Ledger, presenting the readers with some very strange happenings. If you are not a subscriber to the Ledger, you are strongly urged to send in your subscription at once.

"I hear your marriage to Jack is indefinitely postponed."

"Yes. He says it may be a week and it may be a year before we marry. You see, he married another girl.'

Blind or Not?

When a certain Mobile man stopped for luncheon at the small railway station eating-house in a Mississippi town, an old darky shuffled up and announced in a gruff voice, that the bill of fare consisted of ham, eggs, corn bread, and coffee.

After due deliberation the traveler stated that he would like some ham, eggs, corn bread and coffee.

Such a pretentious order for one person only appeared to stagger the aged servitor. But he soon recovered his equanimity and started toward the kitchen. Then he turned and came back with this inquiry:

"Boss, how will yo' hab dem eggs, blind or lookin' at yer?"

THE PRINCE'S PICTURE

By King McCord

EVEN without the rain it would have been too cold for dinner on the boulevard. Through the drizzle the lamps burned with a despairing yellow flicker. The hour was early, but only those who had urgent business abroad or were homeless were to be found on the streets. Those sheltered doorways and passages which the fine rain could not reach were sought out and rendered uninhabitable by the chill wind that penetrated with searching gusts into every nook that otherwise might offer a human being refuge. In short, it was a night that showed Paris in her most unhappy mood.

Along one of the mean streets that let into the Boul' Mich', a street that even by daylight was dismal and repellent, shambled a female with a coarse, frayed shawl over her head. It served both as a bonnet and a cloak, and her bony fingers clutched it closer with every flaw of wind; as if her tattered waist afforded scant protection against the cold. And what a skirt! A cast-off thing that in front did not reach to the tops of her thin, leaky shoes. Behind, it dragged and snapped at her heels like a vicious puppy. The way it was fastened with a big brass safety pin showed that it had been made for a plumper form.

When the wretched creature came to pools of water on the pavement, she did not walk around them or even lift her feet higher as she passed through at the slow pace so characteristic of the spiritless, aimless wanderer. She paused, however, to gaze into shop windows that were lighted. Evidently the eternal feminine had not been quite killed, for she was held longest by the windows that displayed women's wear. The things were at best only cheap exaggerations of fashion's vagaries, made to catch the eyes and empty the purses of poor students and factory girls, yet they held the woman's attention.

Before one window she lingered longest of all. In a crib was a doll dressed as a little baby. So displayed about it that the few pieces made a brave showing was its layette. Well-to-do young mothers would have regarded it with scorn. The materials were cheap, the narrow lace scanty, and the ribbons few. Yet the woman in the rain pressed her face against the window and seemed to take close note of each piece. All the while she babbled to herself.

There was nothing to distinguish this poor sodden being from any other bit of slum wreckage that once had sailed, a stately craft, on the fair summer sea of maidenhood. An experienced gendarme would not have wasted more than one glance on her. If questioned later, he would have described her as about forty years old, face seamed by dissipation, hollow cheeks, sunken eyes that once were beautiful, wisps of unkempt yellowish hair straggling out from under her shawl, and redolent of cheap brandy. She coughed frequently, and each paroxysm seemed to cause her great suffering. Her smile was vacant, as if the present meant nothing to her except when the wind smote her sharply.

At last the woman's wanderings brought her to a brilliantly lighted cinematograph theater. Attracted by the lights and the hope of temporary shelter she walked into the lobby and gazed at the mirrors and the posters which announced the evening's entertainment. The many colors of the lithographs caught her eye, and she spelled the letters of each title, as if the words were strange to her. On an easel was a poster of a handsome youth in a military uniform. She looked at this casually as she had done at the others. Then something about it charmed her. With trembling fingers she traced the big letters at the top of the sheet.

LIFE OF PRINCE DAGOBERT
CROWN PRINCE OF MALMATIA

Below in smaller type were these words:

Slides and characteristic motion pictures of heir apparent, who is to be married this week.

The woman coughed violently and for support clutched the rail in front of the ticket seller's stand. The man on the door cursed her and ordered her out of the lobby. She did not go; she did not even take her eyes off the picture. With her stiffened fingers the outcast began to tear at a knot in her rag of a handkerchief, and after a time unrolled her scanty store of coins. Centime by centime she counted out the price of admission, ten sous, and then tottered past the doorkeeper into the theater.

The Prince Dagobert pictures were being shown when she took her seat. "Prince Dagobert at the head of the Imperial Hussars" was flashed on the sheet. The pictures showed a wild dash of cavalry across a parade ground, and at the head of the regiment rode a graceful youth. It was with difficulty the few spectators in the auditorium could make out his features. As for the woman, she leaned forward and peered hard at the screen, but was unable to distinguish the Crown Prince, her eyes not yet accustomed to the strange light.

The next series was more satisfactory, showing scenes at Hautryn, the capital of Malmatia. "Driving on the Espianade with King Anselm and the Queen Dowager."

The woman sat far forward in her seat and clasped her hands in rapt attention. Because she was talking to herself the few persons close to her looked at her curiously. But she had eyes for no one but the handsome youth in the picture, who bowed and smiled as if his loyal subjects were before him. She even held out her hands to him as if he saw her.

For King Anselm there was only a curious glance, and for the pasty-faced Maria Louisa, his mother, only a look of scorn. In the face of the Queen mother was written all the cruel craft and low cunning that had been the heritage of the Volberg dynasty for generations. It was only upon the Crown Prince that the outcast feasted her eyes, while tears ran down her cheeks, tears that she did not brush away.

When the last picture of Prince Dagobert had been shown the wretched woman sank back in her seat oblivious to what followed. She rocked to and fro and crooned some lullaby, holding her shawl as if it were an infant.

"Come, that's all," said a man who had come in as she did. "Get out!" His

With trembling fingers she traced the big letters.

gruff bearing was as military as his mustache.

"No, there's a second show. I didn't see all," snapped the woman. "Nobody's going to put me out. I paid my money, I did. Ten sous; all I had. I'm going to stay."

Stay she did. It could not be said that she got the full value of her ten sous, since she scarcely looked at the screen until it came time to repeat the Prince Dagobert pictures. Before the pictures of Malmatian royalty were thrown on the screen the manager stepped forward to make an announcement.

"Ladies and gentlemen, the management believes that itself and you are to be congratulated upon the securing of these truly remarkable pictures. As has been previously announced, the showing anywhere in Malmatia of nearly all the earlier pictures of Prince Dagobert that you shall see tonight would subject the management to imprisonment and a heavy fine. You are already familiar with the life history of the lad who some day will rule Malmatia, and I shall not dwell on that now. I shall, however, make explanatory comments upon certain of the slides showing him before moving pictures were invented."

On the screen was thrown a picture of a pretty baby in the arms of a buxom woman.

"Prince Dagobert and Frau Winklemann, his nurse."

A heavenly smile spread over the features of the poor woman as she gazed at the picture. She held out her hands as if to take the royal infant into her own keeping. But to the last Frau Winklemann of the picture held her charge with a firm grasp.

"His first steps. Prince Dagobert in the imperial park with his mother Princess Ildegarde."

This picture brought exclamations of delight from the few women in the auditorium. Princess Ildegarde was holding out her arms to the laughing little Prince, who was making sturdy efforts to reach her. The ragged woman's attitude did not differ from that of the beautiful Princess Ildegarde of the picture. But her smile was a pathetic one, almost washed away by the tears that coursed down her cheeks.

"Bertie, Bertie, little Bertie!" she kept repeating.

The next picture showed the boy Prince starting off to school in democratic fashion, with his mother waving him a farewell from the steps of the palace at Hautryn. At sight of it the woman sobbed audibly, again attracting the attention of those about her.

"I shall call your attention to the motion pictures that follow," announced the manager, "among the first ever taken. They have been secured at great expense, as the Malmatian Government has sought by every means to suppress them, on account of the two pictures last shown, because they show the Prince with his mother, Princess Ildegarde. Shortly before the late King's death, being unable to stand the studied slights of her husband, the profligate Prince Anselm, and the cruel treatment of his mother, Queen Maria Louisia, Princess Ildegarde, the flower of Malmatia, ran away, attempting to take her eleven-year-old son with her. They were pursued, the boy recovered, and she was escorted to the boundary of the kingdom alone. What became of her has ever been a mystery."

The moving picture showed Prince Dagobert, a lad of ten, with his mother, about to get into a barge to be rowed to the royal yacht.

"Betrie, Bertie, my boy, my little Bertie!" screamed the distraught woman, as she gazed at the pictures. Every one turned to look at her. Rising from her seat her tried to walk down the aisle, as if she could turn back the inexorable years with her pleading. The little boy

(Continued on page thirteen.)

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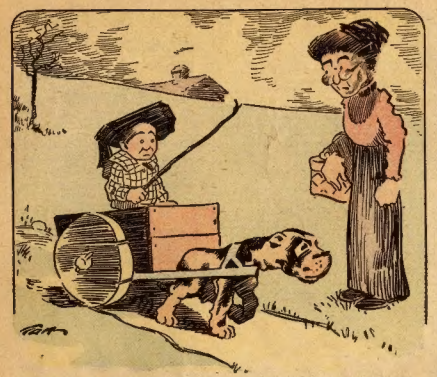


Elderly Lady—Willie, do you think it is right to treat a dog that way?
Small Boy—Well, this is the dog that chased your chickens yesterday.
Elderly Lady—Oh, he is, hey? Stop at our house and let my little boy get in with you. You shouldn't be selfish.

Abnormal Boy.

"I'm worried about my boy."
"What's the matter with him?"
"When I left home yesterday morning I told him to clean up our lawn, and when I got home last evening I found that he had done it."

A Character Reader.

"How do you know that man is a statesman?"
"Because," replied the analyst, "he can wear a silk hat and a frock coat without looking as if he were going to a wedding."

Saving Money.

"My dear, we can't go on in this way. You simply must find some way to cut down your household expenses."
"I've been cutting them down right along. Twice last week I refrained from ordering celery, and on Thursday I telephoned to my dressmaker, saving ten cents car fare that would have been wasted if I had gone to try on my new gown, which wasn't ready. So you see I'm doing my best. But you can't expect me to do all the economizing. What are you doing to reduce your expenses?"
"Me? Great heavens! How can you ask such a thing? I saved six hundred dollars last week."
"Six hundred dollars! Why, George, you haven't got six hundred dollars to save."
"I know it, but I saved it all the same. A friend of mine, who claimed to have inside information concerning Steel, gave me a pointer, and if I had borrowed six hundred dollars and done as he advised I'd have lost every cent of it."

Needed Further Instructions.

Prison Warden—It's just been found out that you didn't commit that crime you've been in for all these years, and so the Governor has pardoned you.
Innocent Man—Th—th—I'm pardoned am I?
Prison Warden—Y-e-s, but don't go yet. I'll have to telegraph for further instructions.
Innocent Man—What about?
Prison Warden—Seems to me that considerin' you hadn't any business here, you ought to pay the State for your board.

By Comparison.

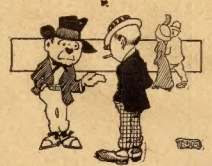
Gullem—No use talking, these professional gamblers are the most openhanded, generous, large-hearted, wholesouled men in the world. When I failed in business, some years ago, not a man I knew would lend me a cent.
Fried—So you've told me.
Gullem—Well, I lost five hundred dollars—all I had with me—at Cheatem's dive last night, and Cheatem came right up, like the prince of good fellows that he is, and handed me a street car transfer to get home with.

Keeping Up Appearances.

Hub (suddenly waking at midnight)—What in the world was that noise?
Wife (entering room)—It's all right, dear. The people are coming home from the opera and I slipped down and gave the front door a slam so the neighbors would think we were there.

Stereotyped Reply.

Mrs. A.—Well, if it isn't Mrs. B. What a stranger you are! Why, it's quite five years since I saw you.
Mrs. B.—Yes. Why haven't you been to see me?
Mrs. A.—Oh, dear! you know how bad the weather's been.



"He doesn't seem to dress his wife very well."
"No—he couldn't afford to keep even his tongue coated."

FACING FEARFUL ODDS.

Maude—Did you say I painted?
Marie—No, I said you powdered.
Maude—Ah, well that puts another complexion on the matter.

"The average man is very much like a baseball player."
"How so?"
"He hates to be put out and he likes to reach home without being touched."

Interested Anyhow.

"I believe he is really in love with you, dear."
"Oh, papa, did he ask for my hand in marriage?"
"No, but he asked about how much it cost me a year to clothe you."

Figuratively Speaking.

"And what is the diplomatic corps?"
"The diplomatic corps," replied the man who takes a pun seriously, "is what the weaker nation is permitted to receive after the stronger one gets through eating the apple."

Summer Job.

"How does your husband keep occupied during his vacation?"
"Oh, he's chauffeur of an electric fan."

Theory Only.

She—I know, Alfred, I have my faults.
He—Oh, certainly.
She—Indeed? Perhaps you'll tell me what they are.

Hubby's Fiction.

Mrs. Kawfey—Are you fond of fiction, Mrs. Klubman?
Mrs. Klubman—The kind I read: not the kind I bear.

Handicap.

"So you are busted again; well, there's a sucker born every minute."
"Yes, and take it from me, old chap, there's a shark born every second."

Wifey—I wish you would get some of those baseball players to spend the coming summer with us.
Hubby—What for?
Wifey—The papers say they are "death on flies."

On "the Street."

"How did you happen to buy way up there at the top?"
"Brain fever."
"But why did you sell down at the bottom?"
"Cold feet."

Damocles' Apprehension.

Damocles sat all night at the banquet with a sword hanging over his head.
"That's nothing," he said. "The thing that bothers me is what my wife will do to me when I get home."

Benefits Forgot.

Alice—What a rude, boorish fellow Mr. Brown is.
Ethel—What did he do, dear?
Alice—Why, he gave me his seat in the street car without lifting his hat.

His Verse.

A little boy who had reached the age when boys feel that a watch is the one thing that makes life worth living, was told that for the present a watch could not be given to him.
But Edward continued to tease for one, until the whole family were wearied. Then his father, after explaining that he should certainly have a watch when he was older, forbade him to mention the subject again.
The next Sunday, the children, as was their custom, repeated Bible verses at the breakfast table. When it was Edward's turn, he astonished them all by saying:
"What I say unto you, I say unto all: Watch!"

Both Liked the Change.

Friend—Given up housekeeping and gone to a hotel, eh? How do you like hotel life?
McTiff—First rate. Never was so happy in my life.
"Indeed! And how does your wife like it?"
"First class."
"Where are you staying?"
"I'm at the St. Charles and she's at the St. James."

A Popular Host.

Traveler—Eh? Has this hotel changed hands?
Clerk—Yes, the old landlord busted up—owed thousands of dollars to all the provision dealers in the neighborhood. For every ten dollars he took in, he spent twenty.
Traveler—Too bad, too bad! He's the only landlord I ever met who knew how to keep a hotel.

One Thing Lacking.

Louise—Clasping me in his arms he murmured: "At last—the time, the place, the girl."
Julia—And was there nothing lacking?
Louise—Yes—a witness.—Life.

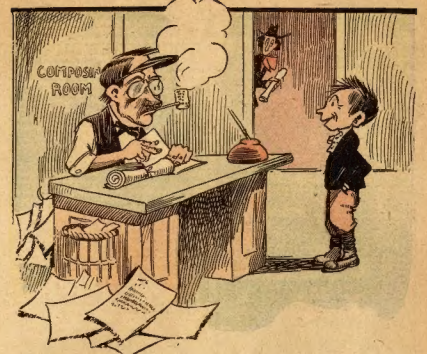
No Chance.

"Remember, my boy, that any little American may some day become President of the United States."
"Not if Teddy is going to keep on runnin'," replied the youth.

Already Supplied.

The Caller—Do you need any typewriter supplies, sir?
The Guvnor—Typewriter supplies. No, I've only just bought her a box of chocolates!

Mother—Johnny, where are those green apples that were in the pantry?
Johnny—They are now keeping company with the Jamaica ginger that was in the medicine chest.



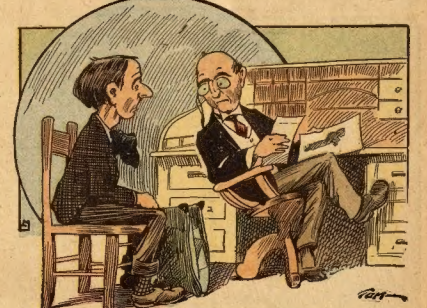
Editor's Office Boy—I told the poet the editor threw his poems on the floor.
Assistant—What did he say?
Editor's Office Boy—Said we got t' quit kickin' his doggerel aroun'.

An Art Pursuit.

"I live for art!" said the prima donna.
"Yes," replied the impresario; "and by this time you ought to have a fine collection of those highly artistic engravings of eminent statesmen on bank notes."

His Excuse.

Magistrate—You are accused of killing the plaintiff's lamb. Have you anything to say?
Prisoner—Well, yer honner, I 'ad ter do it in self-defense. Yer'd 'a' done th' same yer-sel' if it 'ad tried ter bite yer!"



Art Editor (examining sketches)—So, you are wedded to your art?
Young Artist—I am. Would you advise me to go to Paris or Rome?
Art Editor—To Reno!

Old Si—Sam, I think laziness runs in your family.
Sam Smaller—Waal, you must admit that's going some!

Why We Are Always in Debt.

"I paid the bill for your Easter bonnet this morning."
"Good. Now I can go down and get trusted for another one."

YOU KNOW IT.

Amanwillrusharoundlikethis,
Eachsecond'sworthadime;
Butlethimpyradeofghland
He has all sorts of time.

Preferred Dogs.

Visitor—Why do the residents of this town keep so many dogs?
Mr. Suburb—For protection. They are cheaper than police.
Visitor—But dogs are dangerous to inoffensive persons.
Mr. Suburb—So are the police.

His View.

Willis—Do you think a man should be allowed to hold the highest honor in the United States more than four years?
Gillis—Sure thing! I say, if a man can top the league in batting for ten or even fifteen years, let him stay in the game for the good of the sport.—Puck.

HOW HE ESCAPED.

Prison Guard—Come on, get to work there! Don't be watching that airship!

"Gee! she's way up, ain't she? Look at her travel!"

Thump!—Thump!—Thump!

"Great guns! That feller's got away and slugged us all in the bargain!"

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At Dead of Night.

(Continued from page two.)

ordinary. That would seem that there might be a chance of its having a connection with this awful tragedy!"

"Yes, sir, I was thinking that myself. It would seem more like it if we found that Ralph crept back here last night after midnight, and being discovered by his employer looting, turned upon him and choked him to death. I could believe that, where the other theory connected with Miss Cassie looks impossible."

"Still, who can say? I have known women to do some of the most astounding things, when pushed into a corner. Can you describe this Arundel to me?"

Then the superintendent chuckled.

"I could do better than that, sir."

"How so?"

"I am something of a camera fiend, and have hundreds of snapshots of things, places, and people. I remember getting one of Ralph just a day or two ago. I printed some of the pictures only last night, and meant to give him a copy today."

"Then you have one with you now?"

For answer the superintendent drew out a folio, opened the same, and presently his quivering fingers held out a very clear photograph of a man walking along the pavement. One good look the detective took. Then his lips puckered up unconsciously and he emitted a slight whistle. He had recognized the picture!

CHAPTER IV.

TARBOX JOGS HIS MEMORY.

Of course the superintendent had noticed that Blair scanned the photograph closely.

"I think it's a good one of the man. He just happened to be looking my way when I snapped him off. Sort of surprised him, too, for he frowned, and then laughed. Said he never wanted to have his picture taken, and made me promise not to give any around. It was a fancy of his, you see."

"Yes," returned the other gravely; "some people object to having their pictures taken. I've seen men and women struggle like mad, and screw up their faces so as to baffle the photographer."

"You're referring to the Rogues' Gallery pictures, now, I reckon. But you noted that the door was locked here, sir, and I had to use my pass key?"

"Yes, and also notice, Anthony, that both windows are partly open in this room. That one is directly above the particular window we observed in the looted apartments of Mr. Hotchkiss, who is away in Boston, it seems!"

"Then perhaps the same fiend robbed both places?"

"It might be possible, but hardly probable. For instance, that would imply that he passed from here to the rooms below to continue his foul work; and Tarbox, do you imagine for a moment that any criminal, after doing that job, would have the nerve to proceed to another floor to continue his stealings?"

"Well, hardly. I'd imagine he'd be ready to skip out as fast as he could fly."

"Exactly. You see, we have to take such points into consideration when figuring on our cases. Human nature is a great study, and the man who understands it best has the most chance of succeeding as a detective."

"But we are one floor nearer the roof up here!"

"That still means twenty-five feet of space for a thief to dangle, with death accompanying a drop. It could be done. Perhaps it has been carried out. Still, I believe there are easier ways than that to gain admittance to this apartment."

Again he passed around, just as he had done in the rooms downstairs.

"Oh, by the way, do you happen to know anything as to where this mysterious valet went on the occasions of his absenting himself all night, with the knowledge, and apparent consent, of Mr. Paternoster?"

"Well, I am not supposed to know, Mr. Blair."

"Never mind about that. We all have a streak of curiosity in our composition, whether men or women. Accident may have given you a little clew."

"It did."

"And while meaning no harm, and not suspecting Arundel of anything wrong, yet you thought some day to just saunter around that way and see what the place looked like—was that it, Anthony?"

"You describe my intentions to a dot, sir. But so far I had not found the chance to look it up."

Again he was fumbling with that large grained leather receptacle, in which he seemed to carry numerous papers, possibly connected with his accounts of the big apartment house. Then he held out a slip of paper. It looked as though it might have lain on the floor, and been stepped upon by several feet, judging from the grimy hue.

When the detective took it he saw that it was part of an envelope that had come through the mails, for a trace of the postmark could be detected.

"Mr. Ralph Arundel,
"— West Seventeenth Street,
"New York City."

"That would be in the neighborhood of Ninth avenue," mused Blair, as he turned the paper over; then aloud he remarked: "you picked up this after he had torn the envelope to pieces, and cast it away."

"I meant to just throw it in the dust bin near which it was lying; when the name caught my eyes, and the temptation came. He must have thought he tossed it into the waste-paper receptacle, you see. But it's kind of dark around there."

"Just such a little slip has hanged many a man ere now, Anthony. Of course I don't want you to understand me to say this is going to do that same delightful job for Mr. Arundel; but it's going to bring me in touch with the gentleman when I wish, even though he fails to show up here. You are sure he didn't come in late at night?"

"I asked Adolphus this morning, and he said not."

"And who is Adolphus?"

"The colored boy who runs the elevator after nine in the evening."

"Is he here until morning?"

"Certainly, until Flick relieves him. This is a never-closed house. What would you expect in an apartment given up solely to bachelors, who are apt to stay out until dawn? That is why they come here, on account of the liberty they find, with no questions asked."

"And Adolphus says——"

"That Mr. Arundel has not shown up while he was on duty. He wanted to see him about something, and was hoping Ralph would come. So you see he would be apt to know."

"Yes. And this holding off until such an unusual hour this morning must be investigated. Now, Anthony, I want you to keep silent about this matter until I give you leave to speak."

"Yes, sir. But I suppose there are certain things that ought to be done?"

"That's right, and I'll take entire responsibility concerning them. Leave all that to me. Go about your regular work as well as you can. At any rate, don't let any one come here, or learn about this terrible thing."

"I'm ready to trust everything to you, Mr. Blair. And let me say I think I'm the luckiest man living that I happened to send for you on another matter just at this time. It would have given me a fierce jolt if I had butted in here alone, and had seen that sight, sir."

"Do you remember any other person coming to see Mr. Paternoster last night?"

"N—no, I am sure there was no one but Miss Cassie and her gentleman friend, Willis Strang."

"Do you remember any strange person who may have called on some other person?"

"Well, there was such a man who came in in about half-past eleven. But he went away again, not even waiting for me to come back after going to make inquiry as to whether the party he asked to see was in or not."

"You think he went away. Are you dead sure of it?"

"Oh! well, if you pin me right down to hard facts, I suppose I couldn't swear to such a thing, for to tell the truth I didn't see him go. But he was gone when I returned to tell him the party was out; and when I asked Mr. Strang, with whom I had been sitting, where the gentleman was, he said he believed he had gone out of the front door while the boy was nodding."

"Believed he had, eh? That allows for a reasonable doubt. What was to hinder his creeping up the stairs, just then, hiding above until Miss Cassie had finished her interview with her uncle, and then entering here?"

The superintendent looked intensely interested at such a line of reasoning.

"Somehow I've found myself thinking of that man several times since," he remarked.

"And why?"

"I don't just know, myself; but there seemed to be something a little familiar about either his face or his voice. Sort of called up half-forgotten memories; and yet so far I haven't been able to place him."

"That's interesting. It adds to the mystery too. Do you think you'd know him again if you saw him?"

"I'm postive of that."

"Yet he had not called here before last night?"

"Not to my knowledge. Still, hundreds do, that I never see. I have most of my time taken up with duties that keep me away from the entrance during the day. He may have been in here often."

"About his face now?"

"I wish I had had the chance to get a snapshot of it. Again and again it seems to come before me, a dark, handsome face, with piercing black eyes, and hat drawn well down. I seem to think the man might have been a foreign artist."

"Why foreign?"

"Well, there was something in his manner of speaking to suggest that. I've cudgeled my poor brains again and again trying to remember some fellow among my former circus associates who would fill the bill, because it seemed to be impressed on my mind that it was in the far past I must have met him."

"But you have had no success as yet?"

"None whatever," shaking his head in the negative.

"Still, that may have come from not looking in the right quarter."

"I suppose the blame is there."

"Or, it may be, you have unconsciously allowed yourself to fall into error regarding the sex of the party who called here last night."

"What's that, Blair?" demanded the other, hastily.

"Well, I've known of women disguising themselves as men, and so skilfully that they would pass the gantlet of innumerable eyes without being discovered."

"A woman!" muttered Tarbox, fearfully.

"Supposing now, you just glance back once more over those people you knew. Summon the list of names before you for a moment. Now, does there by any accident happen to be one among them who bore the Spanish name of Carmen?"

Tarbox uttered a cry, and stared at the detective as though he believed the other must be something bordering on the magician.

CHAPTER V.

THE SCENT GROWS STRONGER.

It needed no second look to tell Blair that his shot had gone home.

"Then you do remember such a party, Anthony?" he asked, smoothly.

"Yes."

"Can you recall her features fairly well?"

"Sure I can?"

"How would they compare with the face of the mysterious party who called here last night, and vanished while you were away?"

"She was a Mexican woman, a bareback rider of more than usual note, this Carmen; something of a beauty, too. I said he was handsome. Well, since you mention the subject, I confess that his face was built along the same order as that of Carmen, the rider."

"That's a point worth remembering, at any rate. Now, recalling him again to mind, are you willing to once more declare that it would be impossible for the seeming gentleman to be a woman cleverly disguised?"

"No, I couldn't say that conscientiously now."

"Because——"

"Well, I remember that Carmen was a wonderful woman, and if she took a notion to do such a job I believe she had the nerve to carry it out. But there's a hitch in that deal, sir."

"What sort of a hitch?"

"I'm no believer in ghosts."

"What do you mean by that remark, Tarbox?"

"Why, Carmen is dead!"

"Oh! Is that all? Did you see her die?"

"No."

"Do you know any one who did?"

"I do not; but I read it in the paper. There was quite a little account of her exploits; and my name was even mentioned, because you see, once I just happened to stop a runaway horse that had thrown her, and was dragging her at its heels."

"So you saved her life, eh? Well, even newspaper accounts often lie. Carmen wouldn't be the first person who had lived to read his own obituary, and she will not be the last, either."

"I was thinking of something, sir."

"Well, let me hear it."

"I remember hearing her speak once of a twin brother she had down in Mexico."

"A twin brother, eh! Well, now, there might be something in that worth looking up."

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"Suppose that this was him, and that there may have been a reason for his hating Mr. Paternoster bitterly?"

"Always possible. Have you been in these rooms frequently, Tarbox?"

"Oh! no, sir, only a very few times, and then when the gentleman sent for me to talk about various matters connected with his residence here."

"You have never gone around then, examining the various things scattered about here?"

"I have not."

"Perhaps not even examined the pictures on the walls?"

"Not beyond a casual glance as I sat here."

"I'll tell you why I asked."

"I sure wish you would, sir."

"When I looked in his desk a bit ago I discovered a photograph there—just the head of a woman. That was why I asked you whether Cassie happened to be a blonde."

"And I said she was, with golden hair sir. Of course, he would be apt to have a picture of her here, since he was very proud of her beauty."

"If I'm not mistaken you'll find such a picture framed, and hanging on the wall in the other room. I saw it through the open door. This is something different, and somehow I associate it with the name of Carmen."

He flashed the photograph before Tarbox's eyes. It was the head of a brunette, handsome, yet with the slumbering fires of an Etna in her black eyes.

"Yes, that is the Carmen I knew, sir!" cried the superintendent.

"You are positive?"

"I'd be willing to take my oath to it."

"Well, then, that settles another disputed point. We know now that Alexis Paternoster must have had some association with the circus rider, Carmen. We know further that a supposed man, greatly resembling the said Carmen in face and voice, called here last night. Now, let us ascertain whether the party he wanted to see has any knowledge of him. What name did the caller give?"

"Leon Burgess."

"Not a common one. Do you suppose the gentleman he asked to see is in now?"

"Oh! yes, sir. One of those heads you saw in the hall belonged to Mr. Toplady."

"Suppose you go and ask him then if he has ever met a Leon Burgess? If he has it will not imply that my theory is radically wrong; while on the other hand should he disclaim all knowledge of the party it must simplify matters greatly."

"Shall I go now, sir?"

"If you please. And Anthony——"

"Yes, sir, I know what you are going to say; and make your mind easy on that score. Not a breath will I allow to pass my lips concerning this thing," and he shudderingly glanced toward the chair, around which he made a wide circle when going out.

Blair spent the next five minutes in looking about with those keen eyes of his, so accustomed to discovering minute things calculated to get past other people's observation. He even went into the bathroom, and prowled around there part of the time. When Tarbox returned he was standing in front of the murdered man, gazing steadily at the dumb occupant of the easy-chair, as though he might be endeavoring to read some dire secret written there.

"Well, how was it?" he asked.

"I saw Mr. Toplady."

"Does he know any one by that name?"

"No, sir, he is positive he does not."

"Never heard of the party, most likely?"

"He says he never did, sir."

"H'm then doubtless the fellow learned in some way who Toplady was, and knew that he was away from his apartments last night. That gave him the chance to make a seemingly innocent request. I sent you to find out if the gentleman happened to be in his rooms. Perhaps his valet replied to your inquiry through the house phone, and said he as out."

"Just what happened. Toplady's man was waiting up for his master, but he said he did not expect him in until two a. m. It's just marvelous how you hit the actual truth in your guesses, sir."

"Perhaps these guesses, as you call them, are founded on positive facts that would admit of no other explanation. But that is neither here nor there. By the way, who happens to have the apartment just above this, Anthony?"

"Above the Paternoster one—let me see, why, of course, it is Mr. Carberry."

"Who is he?"

"I don't really know. He has only been with us a week."

"Indeed. And does he appear to be acquainted with any of the other gentlemen in the house?"

"No, sir. But then he's an Englishman, and only been in New York a short time. He took the apartment furnished. It really belongs to another party, who is traveling in Egypt with his aunt, from whom he has all his money."

Blair went over to the window again, and this time instead of looking down he seemed to cast his eyes upward, as though mentally figuring whether it would be at all possible for a venturesome gentleman burglar to make his way from the upper floor to the window-sill at which he stood. He gave no voice to his conclusion, if so be he did reach one while standing thus.

No doubt a score of theories may have been floating in that wonderful brain of his just at that moment; but no one would ever have dreamed it from the placid character of his strong face. Upon one line of reasoning he was positive; the man in that chair was dead, and circumstances pointed strongly to the fact that he had been basely murdered. By a peculiar fatality he, a detective, had been brought in touch with the mystery before any one else knew of it; and to Blair it seemed as though this necessitated his taking hold of the enigma with earnestness, determined to ferret out the truth.

Whether the guilty soul were Cassie Paternoster; Carmen, the former queen of the circus ring; Arundel, the valet of the dead man, and whom the detective remembered as one whose face could be found in the Rogues' Gallery as that of a criminal; or some other party as yet unknown, made no difference.

He believed he had learned all that was to be picked up on the ground, since he could not expect those mute walls to give up the ghastly secret they possessed. He would go out into the busy marts of men, and run these several theories down as speedily as possible. Meanwhile he could depend on Tarbox, faithful fellow, and able to hold a still tongue, to guard the terrible secret from the outside world.

"Come with me, Anthony. Lock the door after you, and we will go. If any one calls and asks for Mr. Paternoster, tell them he is out. If Arundel comes back, on your life find some sort of an excuse to hold him here until I rejoin you. Understand?" he said.

And the ex-circus performer replied in the affirmative, feeling that the Fates had decreed his fortunes should be locked up with those of this remarkable man whom he had long known and respected.

The continuation of this remarkable story will be found in the Ledger issue of next week. If you are not a regular subscriber to the Ledger, we would like to have your name on our list. The Ledger is only $1.00 a year, and we have stories awaiting publication that you cannot afford to miss.

* * *

The Druggist—I can't sell you a stamp unless you make a purchase.

Bright Man—All right; give me another stamp.

* * *

The Prince's Picture.

(Continued from page nine.)

waved his hand at her, then the screen glared a dazzling white. It was the end of the reel.

With a shriek the woman dropped in a heap, an inert mass. She did not weep. She did not cough. She did not move. Those near by carried her into the manager's office where it was seen that she was dead.

* * *

How to Act.

He was only a young commercial traveler, and had not been on the road for many months. When, therefore, it chanced that he found himself short of funds, he scarcely knew what course to take.

After much hard thinking he resolved to let the office know his sad plight. From the nearest postoffice he dispatched a wire:

"Have run short of ready money. Please wire me here."

But the following morning brought no reply to his appeal. Patiently he waited for the second post, but nothing came.

Again he resolved to wire, this time more urgently.

"No money. How shall I act? Wire reply."

Almost before he had reached his hotel again the telegraph boy had brought a reply. Hastily the young commercial traveler tore open the envelope and read:

"Act as if you were broke!"

* * *

Richard's Motto.

The young hopeful had secreted some bright buttons in his pocket which came from the automobile show. When Sunday school was well under way he took one of them out and pinned it on his coat as a desirable ornament. Unfortunately, when the minister came to speak to the dear children his nearsighted eyes were caught by the bright color of the button.

"Well, Richard, I see you are wearing some motto, my lad. What does it say?"

"You read it, sir," replied Richard, hanging his head.

"But I cannot see; I haven't my glasses on. Read it so we can all hear you."

Richard blushed. "It says, sir: 'Ain't it hell to be poor!'"

* * *

Reason for Haste.

There's an old story about an Irishman who was painting a fence, and who worked fast so that he might get the job finished before the paint gave out. Our grandfathers laughed at at that joke before our grandfathers bought razors.

The new version came in recently; the setting is up to date, but the old point sticks out. Our correspondent says:

"I have a touring car and I have a chauffeur. The latter is a bright Italian boy and an invaluable servant. The other night, ten miles from home but inside the city limits, I observed that he was putting on a burst of speed.

"'Slow down a bit, Giuseppe,' I warned him; 'we'll be arrested if we keep on at this speed.'

"'Scusa me, mister boss,' he answered; 'we're ten mila from home an' only got enough gas for t'ree mila. Eef we no hurry we never mak' eet!'"

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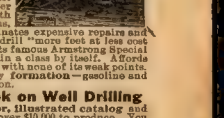

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I want to send you a **complete ten days' treatment entirely free** to prove to you that you can cure yourself at home easily, quickly and surely. Remember, that it **will cost you nothing** to give the treatment a complete trial; and if you should wish to continue, it will cost you only about 12 cts. a week, or less than 2 cts. a day. It will not interfere with your work or occupation. **Just send me your name and address**, tell me how you suffer if you wish, and I will send you the treatment for your case, entirely free, in plain wrapper, by return mail. I will also send you **free of cost**, my book—"WOMAN'S OWN MEDICAL ADVISER" with explanatory illustrations showing why women suffer, and how they can easily cure themselves at home. Every woman should have it, and learn to **think for herself.** Then when the doctor says—"You must have an operation," you can decide for yourself. Thousands of women have cured themselves with my home remedy. It cures **all, old or young.** To **Mothers of Daughters**, I will explain a simple home treatment which speedily and effectually cures Leucorrhœa, Green Sickness and Painful or Irregular Menstruation in Young Ladies. Plumpness and health always result from its use.

Wherever you live, I can refer you to ladies in your own locality who know and will gladly tell any sufferer that this **Home Treatment** really cures all women's diseases and makes women well, strong, plump and robust. **Just send me your address**, and the free ten days' treatment is yours, also the book. Write today, as you may not see this offer again. Address

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Chicago Ledger

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COPIES WEEKLY.

GENTLE JABS.

Some men make matters worse if they try to explain.

No man ever does as much today as he is going to do tomorrow.

Men may be born modest, but women have to acquire all they get.

How the average man does like to see the other fellow get a roast!

One way to avoid being disappointed in love is to marry for money.

Few men are capable of putting up a good bluff just before pay day.

The average pup is friendly as a candidate the day before an election.

When a man's conscience troubles him he thinks he has indigestion.

There's no fool like an old fool, except the fool girl who marries him.

Every time a man makes a lucky guess he boasts of his good judgment.

Perhaps a woman changes her mind frequently to keep from wearing it out.

We feel sorry for the man who can't blow his own horn without going on a toot.

Few people have will power enough to stop talking when they have said enough.

It's far easier for a woman to get her fortune told than it is for a man to make his.

Follow other people's advice and you will always have something to blame your failures on.

A man is no sooner elected to office than he begins to kick because it isn't more remunerative.

But the majority of young people who are engaged are not insane—even if they do act that way.

A woman can easily win in any kind of an argument with a man if she knows just when to turn on the briny flow.

Almost any fool can distinguish between vice and virtue, but it takes a wise man to act according to his understanding.

A good many people do not believe in the efficiency of prayer because the Lord gives them what they deserve instead of what they ask for.

When a man wins five dollars on a horse race he is apt to tell everybody he won fifty dollars—except his wife, who would want to spend it.

Any man knows what a woman who doesn't think talks about, but it's impossible for him to discover what a woman who doesn't talk thinks about.

(Continued from page four.)

long down into the inclosure; and yet it was no mystery what had happened to him, since the sharp cough of a rifle had sounded immediately under my nose; and I realized that the little woman, God bless her, had arisen to the occasion, knowing how I was beset.

Nor did she stop at that one shot; for others rang out; and under so hot a fusillade the most reckless of the invaders concluded that the time had not arrived for a successful carrying of our stockade, for they dropped back again whence they had come, leaving us victors for the time being.

I gave a shout to relieve my pent-up feelings, and at the same time encourage the brave girl who had stood by me so handsomely; but it was hardly to be expected that she would feel anything of the same exaltation over the shooting of human beings, men-wolves though they undoubtedly were; and I was not surprised to see Mary almost collapse as she realized what she had been compelled to do, though she shut her teeth firmly together as if to resolved not to give way to any weakness at this grave moment.

At any rate, the enemy had received a terrible lesson, and while it would be too much to hope that they would retire from the combat, their power for doing harm had been considerably lessened by the work of our guns.

This strange story leads to very extraordinary situations and dramatic episodes. The reader will find it eminently worth reading to the end. Next week's Ledger will contain further chapters of it. The surest way to get the Ledger is to subscribe for it and have it come to your home regularly. Today is a good time to attend to this.

The Backwoodsman.

Early in the winter a man from the backwoods wandered into a Syracuse gents' furnishing store. Here the shiny winter caps caught his eye.

After gazing at these for a long while, he said:

"How much do you want for one of them caps?"

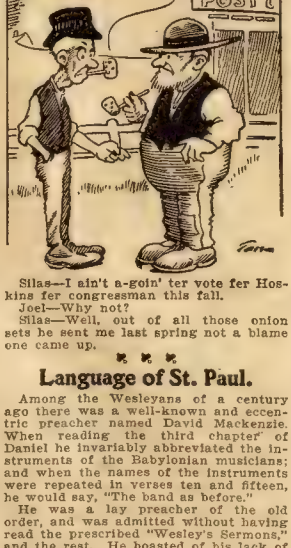
"One dollar," rejoined the clerk. "Try this one on, sir."

But this proved to be a size or so too small, sitting upon the woodchopper's head, like a peanut on a barrel.

"Here's y'r dollar, mister. I'll take this cap."

"But the cap's too small," declared the amazed clerk, pushing back the proffered dollar. "Wait till you try——"

"Oh, I'll fix this so's it'll fit," was the backwoodsman's final exchange before starting off with the purchase. "When I git home all I'll have to do is to slit its back up with a knife, lace it with a shoestring, and everything'll be all hunkydory!"—Judge's Library.



Silas—I ain't a-goin' ter vote fer Hoskins fer congressman this fall.

Joel—Why not?

Silas—Well, out of all those onion sets he sent me last spring not a blame one came up.

Language of St. Paul.

Among the Wesleyans of a century ago there was a well-known and eccentric preacher named David Mackenzie. When reading the third chapter of Daniel he invariably abbreviated the instruments of the Babylonian musicians; and when the names of the instruments were repeated in verses ten and fifteen, he would say, "The band as before."

He was a lay preacher of the old order, and was admitted without having read the prescribed "Wesley's Sermons," and the rest. He boasted of his lack of "book learning," and scornfully told a student of the new school, who was learning Latin, that "English was good enough for Paul; ain't it good enough for you?"

Rural Bargain-Hunter.

A man with a long but scanty beard and a gimlet eye came into Cyrus Teed's general store, is a little New Hampshire town, and called for five cents' worth of peanuts. Cyrus measured out a pint and handed the bag over. The man weighed it in his hand, and looked more discontented than ever.

"There ain't many here, be they?" he asked, querulously. "Ain't it kinder small measure?"

"Regular full pint, what I always give for nickel!" snapped Cyrus, who knew his customer well.

"Why, when I was down in Boston," argued the bearded man, "there was a place there where I could get twicet as many peanuts as this for five cents."

"Well," said Mr. Teed, defiantly, "the round trip to Boston is only $2.85. Why don't ye go down to Boston and get your money's worth?"

This closed the incident.

He Knew It!

A young man who had been born and reared in the backwoods went to Chicago and made a lot of money. Then he returned to his native village and asked his father to take a trip to the Windy City. The old man, however, was not enthusiastic over the proposition. He had read of the fires, automobile accidents, and other catastrophes in big cities. Finally, after much argument and persuasion on the part of his son, the father reluctantly agreed to undertake the journey At the little country station he was panic-stricken and tried to get permission to go back home. Once on the train, his nerve began to revive, and all went well until the train dashed into a tunnel black as night. When this happened, the old man grabbed his umbrella, hit his son a whack on the head, and cried out: "I knew something would happen. I've gone blind!"

His Question.

J. G. Phelps Stokes, at the Knickerbocker Club in New York, was praising the various country week associations that give the children of the poor brief country vacations.

"The little urchins," said Mr. Phelps Stokes, "enjoy these healthful holidays, and wonderful are the remarks that the country's strangeness draws from their young lips. One August afternoon a tiny East Sider, pointing to a farmer's herds in a shady meadow, asked:

"Where does the farmer get all the chewing gum for his cows?"

Frontier Hardships.

"Oh, yes," she says, "we are going to our camp in the Adirondacks during August. We really rough it up there."

"You do?"

"Yes. We leave the under butler at home and we only have six-course dinners."—Judge.

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WANTED—Agents for our Vegetable Soap. Wm. Lash Company, Fifth avenue and Taylor street, Chicago.

FIVE Dollars per hundred for collecting names and addresses. All or spare time. Stamp for particulars. Penn Sales Co., Darby, Penna.

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A fussy man is like a camel—always going around with his back up.

ANECDOTES OF PEOPLE

A Wonderful Artist.

In the Walnut street buffet, once owned by Frank Jones, are several valuable paintings and works of art in pastel. One of the paintings is that of the front page of a newspaper the day war was declared with Spain. It is so cleverly done that in looking at it under the proper light one imagines he sees the paper tacked on a board. A fly, with its transparent wings, looks as if it were about to take flight.

One day, during the life of Mr. Jones, a stranger stood gazing at the painting for a long time. It was done by Van Millet, a local artist.

"I would like to have a portrait of my mother painted," said the man solemnly. "Does this artist do that kind of work?"

"He certainly does," replied Jones.

"Well, I guess it would be no use to try to get a portrait, as all I have is an old daguerreotpye. He couldn't make a picture from that."

"Why, say," advised Jones, "all this artist needs is a lock of hair. That old what-ever-you-call-it would be in the way."

A Tight Grip.

"Jones is not looking very prosperous. I thought his wife had money?"

"She had."

"Then how do you account for Jones' look of poverty?"

"She still has it."

Misnamed.

A tourist, who recently returned from a trip through the Southern States, relates this conversation, which he overheard between a farmer's wife and a negro alleged to be looking for work:

"Be there any work around here, missus?" asked the applicant.

"Well, we do need a man," replied the woman. "Do you want work?"

"Yessum."

"Well, I'm looking for a man to do the odd jobs around the house, always be polite, willing to work, and never be impudent."

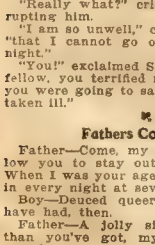
"Did you say you was looking for a hired man, missus?" asked the negro.

"Yes; why do you ask?"

"Well, it 'pears to me that a hired man isn't what you want. You want a husband."

Hard on the Actor.

A musical afterpiece called "The Caravan; or, The Driver and His Dog," produced at the old Drury Lane Theater, had as its chief attraction a dog named Carlo, who leaped into a tank of real water on the stage and saved a child.



One day Sheridan, the playwright, went to see the performance of this wonderful dog. As he entered the greenroom the actor who took the leading part in the piece met him with a sorry face.

"Sir, there is no guarding against illness; it is truly lamentable to stop the run of a successful piece like this. But really——"

"Really what?" cried Sheridan, interrupting him.

"I am so unwell," continued the actor, "that I cannot go on longer than tonight."

"You!" exclaimed Sheridan. "My good fellow, you terrified me; I thought that you were going to say that the dog had taken ill."

Fathers Compared.

Father—Come, my son; I can not allow you to stay out so late at night. When I was your age my father had me in every night at seven o'clock.

Boy—Deuced queer father you must have had, then.

Father—A jolly sight better father than you've got, my boy, you young rascal!

A Diseased Imagination.

His curiosity had led him to visit one of the largest of our lunatic asylums. He became deeply interested in one of the patients, who was evidently a highly educated man, and apparently very intelligent. The visitor began to think it a scandal he should be detained.

"Sit down," he said, "and we will talk your case over."

The inmate continued to stand.

"Why don't you sit down?" the visitor asked.

"I can't sit down—there isn't any toast," replied the other.

"Not any toast?" echoed the visitor in astonishment.

"No. You see, I'm a poached egg," was the reply.

A Shot at Scientists.

Paul J. Rainey, whose big game hunt in Africa has made him the champion lion slayer of the world, was asked, in an interview in New York, a question about the habits of lions.

"I can't answer that question," the young millionaire said, with a smile, "and I shan't pretend I can. Why should I emulate the scientific lecturer?

"A scientific lecturer, at the conclusion of a lecture of the most obtuse description, took a sip of water, and said:

"'Question time. If any one now has any question of a scientific nature to ask, I shall be glad to answer it to the best of my ability.'

"An old lady in a plaid shawl rose and said:

"'Will you please tell me why it is, sir, that wet tea leaves kill roaches?'

"The lecturer knew no more than Adam why wet tea leaves killed roaches, but, not to be nonplused, he answered glibly:

"'When a roach, madam, sees a wet tea leaf,' he exclaims: 'Hello, here's a blanket!' and then wraps himself up in it, falls sleep, and, naturally, catches a severe cold, which, developing into pneumonia, in a few days kills the unfortunate insect.'"

Laughed Before He Cried.

It was house-cleaning time and everything about the place was torn up. Willie's father had taken a day from the office and was proceeding to show his son and heir the proper manner to lay and stretch a carpet. Presently Willie's mother heard a commotion in the dining-room, and Willie came running into the kitchen crying bitterly.

"Why, Willie! What's the matter?" exclaimed his mother.

"Papa hit his thumb with the hammer."

"Now, that is too bad, but I wouldn't cry about it. Why didn't you laugh?"

"I-I d-did!" sobbed Willie.

Poetic Justice.

After an hour's hard prevarication, the musical instrument dealer had succeeded at last in working off the cheap cornet on a customer at four times its value.

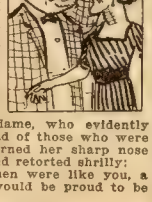
"Where shall I send it?" he inquired, when the customer had signified that he gave in.

"To 950 Fig street. My flat is on the third floor," was the response.

The enterprising tradesman's jaw fell. He had moved with his family the day before to the flat on the second floor of 950 Fig street on a three years' agreement.

Reason to Be Proud.

He was very large and evidently had imbibed too freely. He conversed with every one in the car with splendid impartiality.



At Market street, as most of the passengers arose to get out, he stood back with wobbly courtesy and said in clarion tones, with a flourish of one unsteady hand:

"Stand aside and let all the old maids off first, gentlemen!"

One sour-faced dame, who evidently came under the head of those who were to descend first, turned her sharp nose about in his face and retorted shrilly:

"Sir, if all the men were like you, a good many of us would be proud to be old maids!"

America Ahead.

A boy in a Newark school scratched his head for a long time before attempting to compare the animals of North America with those of Europe.

At last in his desire to say something, he wrote: "The animals of North America are not as large as those of Europe but they get there just the same."

This is a small picture of my Art Upright Parlor Piano style 40—a magnificent instrument in genuine San Domingo Mahogany Cabinet—Ivory Keys—Copper Overstrung Strings in the Bass—Empire Grand Top—a piano which I'll place aside any $500 piano you can buy in your vicinity. This one and all other Thiery Pianos are shown in my Style Book in full-page pictures

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Our Boys' Corner

The Rival Submarines

Or, Close Play for a Million

By Weldon J. Cobb

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CHAPTER X.

IN DISGUISE.

In a flashing instant of time Bert Noble realized the desperate plot that was hatching in the low Chilean drinking den. The package he had ignorantly carried into Porto Nueva he now knew was a giant dynamite torpedo, prepared by some person at the order of the native to whom he had brought it. It was to pass into the hands of the notorious commander of the submarine Ravager. The latter would locate the Destroyer, attach the torpedo under its keel, and at one fell stroke dispose of a dreaded enemy.

Bert's first impulse was to rush for the street, regain the Destroyer, and inform Bob of the dreadful danger that menaced. Then he decided that he was in a position to make new discoveries by continuing to play the eavesdropper. Just then the native who had led him to the place came out from the inner room.

"Here," he said, offering some small silver change to Bert, "go and get yourself a meal; you deserve it. I shall remain here about an hour. Be back within that time. I have some work for you that will pay you handsomely."

There was nothing for Bert to do under the circumstances except to leave the place. He was not anxious to get out of range of the men who were doubtless now formulating some plot against his friends of the Destroyer, details of which he was very anxious to learn.

As Bert got outside, however, a thought came to him, suggesting a plan of procedure along a new line of progress. He started forthwith in the direction of the hut to which the native had first led him.

As he passed a small general store he noticed in the windows beyond its dirty panes of glass a heap of sulphur sticks on sale. They were very generally carried in the seaport towns where landing vessels used them for fumigation purposes when sickness was on board. Bert bought two of the cubical sticks with some of the money the native had given him. Then he hastened on to the hut.

"They look just like the sticks of dynamite," he soliloquized. "I don't like to tamper with a risky article like dynamite, . . . can't see the Destroyer blown up."

Bert could not get into the hut without breaking the padlock on the door. He finally located a loose window, however, managed to remove it, and was soon inside the rude habitation. He took up the torpedo gingerly. He studied its mechanism, and with great care removed the wire netting on which the cartridges rested. Then he disconnected the fuses leading from them up to the clockworks.

"That's a relief," he breathed more freely, as he wrapped the dynamite in the paper covering of the sulphur sticks and placed the package in an inner pocket.

Bert now substituted the sulphur. To a casual observer, when he had replaced the wire netting, the torpedo looked just as it had originally. He left it on the table. Then he got out through the window and replaced the sash as he had originally found it.

"I must get rid of the dynamite," he mused, "but I can't risk the lives of others, leaving it lying around loose. When I get to the sea, though, I must sink it out of the reach of harm."

Bert regained the groggery and for ten minutes sat in the outer room. Then the native came out and joined him. He was excited with drink and quite jolly. With him were three villainous-looking fellows, two of whom Bert recognized as members of the crew of the Ravager. They scarcely noticed Bert, and he felt safe in his disguise.

The native led them to his hut, Bert trailing on behind. The torpedo was delivered, some money changed hands, and the plotters separated.

"See," spoke the native, gloatingly, as he and Bert found themselves alone, and the man showed a handful of gold-pieces. "A goodly reward, eh, my friend?"

"It is quite a sum," answered Bert.

"And I can double—aye, treble it," announced the man boastfully. "Alcaza must spare me your services for a day or two."

"As you say, senor," replied Bert.

"I will send you back with your pockets lined with gold," declared the native. "I need your help."

"Command me," said Bert.

"There is a twenty-mile row to take in a yawl. You can handle the oars."

"Surely."

"Then come."

The man proceeded down to the beach. He haggled some time with the owners of some fishing boats. Finally he struck a bargain for one. The man sat in the stern and guided the boat while Bert did the rowing. Then they changed places, and he spelled his young assistant as to rowing. The course was directed in and out of the archipelago. The yawl was just emerging from a rock-strewn channel when Bert gave a vivid start. Somewhat ahead of him was a small dory. He recognized it as belonging to the Destroyer. In fact, it was the boat that had brought him to the mainland from the submarine.

"Why, it's Bob," reflected Bert. "He is probably rowing around awaiting my return. He must not recognize me. It would excite distrust and spoil all my plans."

A clever idea came to Bert. He was certain that his companion in the yawl did not understand any English. Bert began to chant in a loud voice as if suddenly breaking into a song:

"Look out, my friend, don't recognize me," and he ended up in a humming tune.

Then, suddenly, Bert did a second clever thing. He darted a swift glance all about, purposely ran the yawl up against a rock, and then with a nimble dive went head over heels out of the boat and into and under the water.

His companion in the boat was too ignorant of a foreign tongue and too dull of comprehension to connect the sudden disaster with any purpose on the part of Bert. Instantly he was wholly occupied in regaining the oars, which Bert had dropped, and in fighting the yawl.

Meanwhile, the lad swam under water. He came up directly at the stern of the boat in which Bob sat. Clinging to it, in a rapid undertone he voiced the words:

"Don't recognize me. Pretend you are helping me out of the water."

"Bert!" exclaimed the astonished Bob, under his breath.

"Yes—listen."

Faster than he had ever spoken before, Bert recited the situation the torpedo episode, the fact that the people of the Ravager in some mysterious way had become apprised of the arrival of the Destroyer, the belief on the part of Bert that by sticking to the native he could learn still more of the plots of the Rodridgo gang.

Then, as the yawl came up, the two young friends acted as though they were strangers. Bert resumed the oars on the yawl, and soon Bob and his boat were lost to view.

CHAPTER XI.

HERMIONE.

"What does it all mean?"

Bert Noble asked himself this question a few hours after the adventure in which he had so deftly communicated to Bob the situation as it stood. He knew that the boy detective would intelligently attend to his end of the proposition. So Bert fixed his mind solely upon what might develop from his association with the native, who was taking him with him on his present mysterious mission.

The native had directed Bert how to proceed after they had left Bob. They traveled in all about twenty miles. The yawl threaded a series of archipelagoes, finally arriving at a rocky, green-verdured island of quite some size. As they landed upon this, Bert noticed a small electric launch moored in a little cove. There was no sign of any one aboard. As they ran up a little stream a short distance, he observed an open hut with hammocks swung from trees surrounding it.

Here were half a dozen men lounging about and smoking. They were rough-looking fellows, and Bert wondered as to what their appearance in this strange and out-of-the-way place might mean. Their seeming leader came down to the point where the yawl was moored. He recognized the native, glanced carelessly at Bert, and a brief conversation ensued.

"You come from Rodridgo?" asked the islander.

"But indirectly from the Ravager."

"Ah, then?"

"Rodridgo has sent a message."

"For me?"

"As you say."

"Let me have it."

The native handed a folded note to the islander. The latter scanned it closely. Then he said:

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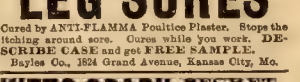

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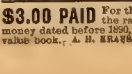

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"You are to take our charge away, then?"

"It seems so," responded the native.

"And we?"

"Are to remain here for further orders."

"I see. You depart at once?"

"Oh, no," answered the native. "It is best to go at night. We will start about dusk."

"You shall find our charge ready," spoke the islander, and he nudged his shoulder to a point beyond the camp.

Bert, who had listened eagerly to every word spoken, glanced in the direction indicated. He saw where a narrow ledge of rocks crossed a ravine, terminating in a sort of isolated cave. Among the shubbery surrounding this Bert fancied he made out a tent. Then he saw bustling about the outside of this a portly native woman.

"It is of some prisoner, guarded in that safe retreat they were talking about," thought Bert.

The fellows at the camp made the native fully welcome. They accepted Bert as a trusted companion of the man, and a great meal was provided the visitors.

Then all hands fell to feasting. The men smoked, drank, and played cards. Bert reclined in a hammock, watching and listening.

"They are going to remove some prisoner in the yawl at nightfall," he mused. "I wonder who it can be?"

The drowsy afternoon was passing away, when Bert suddenly aroused to action. He became aware of the fact that the last one of the men, including the native, had partaken so freely of drink that they lay in a stupor on the ground. Glancing over at the isolated cave, Bert saw the stout, clumsy old woman he had noticed at his first arrival on the island asleep in a hammock.

"I believe I'll take a general look around," decided Bert.

He trod cautiously and proceeded slowly. Bert got over the narrow rocky ledge. As he stepped upon the cave platform he paused abruptly.

From beyond the tent he could hear the soft mellow tinkle of a mandolin causing gently undulating echoes. Some one with light, deft touch was playing a mournfully pathetic air on the instrument.

"Why," gasped Bert, "that is the air that used to be played on the Ravager by Hermione!"

He glanced quickly back at the camp, and then at the old woman asleep in the hammock. Nobody moved. Instead of arousing them, the soothing music seemed to lull them to still deeper slumber.

Bert cautiously stole past the sleeping old woman. As he rounded some bushes he came to a standstill with a shock that held him spellbound.

A beautiful young girl sat at the side of the tent on a camp stool. Her face was pale and sad, her eyes tear-filled. They were fixed on the far distance with a longing expression in their liquid depths, while her shapely hand swept the strings of the mandolin lightly and abstractedly. Bert's heart beat like a trip hammer. An extravagant delight seized his ardent soul.

"Hermione!" was all he could murmur, in a rapt whisper.

The girl started, stared at him, and then, the eye of love or of friendship piercing his disguise, her features grew radiant. She sprang to her feet with a wild cry of ecstasy.

"Oh, at last!"

"S—sh!" warned Bert.

He made sure by looking carefully that the cry of the startled girl had not aroused the slumberers. As he turned toward her again, she stretched out both hands and clasped his own in frantic hopefulness.

"Oh, take me away from here!" she pleaded.

"I shall, if I die in the attempt!" declared Bert, heroically. "Now is our golden opportunity. Obey me implicitly."

"I will! I will!" answered the young girl fervently.

Very cautiously and noiselessly, hand in hand, they passed the sleeping old woman. She did not stir. Past the camp, then, and the stupefied men there they glided, protected by the leafy verdure surrounding the place. Only once, and then for a flashing instant of time, did Bert pause. It was where the guns of the island crew lay in a heap across a pile of blankets.

One by one he let them down carefully into a deep chasm with a single exception, which he reserved for himself as a defense and protection in case they were pursued.

"Listen to me Hermione," he said, as they hurried on. "We must reach the yawl in the inlet yonder."

"Yes, yes—I understand," said his anxious companion breathlessly.

"I have friends in a submarine not twenty miles distant."

"I am so glad."

"The mischief!"

Bert uttered the words in considerable dismay, as his foot caught in a loose tree root and he fell flat. The gun in his hand slipped his grasp, landed on a rock two feet distant, and exploded.

Bang! As the vibrant echoes of the report filled the air and aroused sleeping birds, instantly there was a vivid commotion at the camp.

Glancing back at the spot, Bert, saw one man leap up, then the others. There was a great ado as they running to and fro, and then apparently they made out the fleeing fugitives.

"Oh, what shall we do?" exclaimed the terrified Hermione.

"Have no fear," responded Bert. "We have too good a start over them to have them catch us."

It was a vital situation, one for which Bert Noble had longed for many a weary, anxious month. He understood now that Rodridgo had sent the native to bring the beautiful island captive once more into his direct power. He calmed the excitement of his lovely companion as he briefly but clearly told her of the situation. Searching for their guns, the islanders, found them missing, and then surmised the trick that had been played on them and began the chase.

"Run on. Get to the boat," spoke Bert, pointing to the yawl in the inlet.

"But you, my friend?"

"I will be with you in a very few minutes."

As the girl obediently hurried forward, Bert ran to the edge of the cliff. Below lay the gasoline launch. He knew that no one was on board, but Bert also realized that as soon as the yawl put to sea, the islanders would board the launch and pursue and overtake them.

"The dynamite," breathed Bert, grimly. "Luckily I did not dispose of it."

His drew from an inner pocket as he spoke the dynamite cartridge he had removed from the torpedo in the house of the native at Porto Nueva. He poised it, aimed directly at the deck of the rocking craft below. Then——

Crash!

CHAPTER XII.
CONCLUSION.

"Halt!"

At the threshold of success and liberty Bert Noble experienced a thrill of dismay. His fair companion, Hermione, uttered a cry of terror and despair.

"We are lost!" she wailed, and shrank back in the little yawl and covered her face with her hands.

It was just at sunset, and the two refugees had long since left far behind them the island where Hermione had been a prisoner. In chagrin and helpless, her former jailors had seen her borne away swiftly and safely, their launch a mass of shattered fragments, with no means of pursuing her.

Bert had rowed bravely and untiringly. He was headed for the spot where he had left the Destroyer. A new heart of hope was born in his beautiful charge, as she realized that her long, anxious captivity was at an end, and that she would soon be surrounded by friends.

Suddenly, as they turned the end of a small bluffy island, Bert gave a great start. There arose in the direct course before him a shining circular outline. It was the conning tower of the Ravager!

At the same moment one section of it slid back, and there appeared in view, surrounded by several of his crew, the dreaded Rodridgo.

Instantly, it seemed, the commander of the Ravager recognized Hermione. It was then that he seized a megaphone, and that peremptory mandate rang out sharply:

"Halt!"

Bert swung the oars in a flash. The boat turned, and he essayed to get out of range of the submarine by speeding on a close shore line around the end of the island. There was no second verbal command, but almost instantly a shot rang out, then another. Both bullets from a close range rifle in the hands of Rodridgo struck the hull of the boat below the water line.

Bert dropped the oars as the water rushed in the splintered boards. He might have kept on for a few yards farther, but he noted that the marksman in the lookout of the Ravager was drawing bead on the yawl. He feared that a shot might strike his shrinking, terrified girl companion.

The Ravager now ran directly up to the yawl, which was filling with water. A boat hook was thrust out, the yawl was drawn close up to the open slide in the lookout.

Very quickly Hermione was lifted from the yawl into the Ravager. Two men seized Bert and dragged him also aboard. The two refugees were led below the surface and into one of the cabins. Rodridgo waved his hand to dismiss the men who had led the captives to the cabin. Then his wicked eyes rested on Hermione.

"What does this mean, girl?" he demanded.

Hermione sat with her face buried in her hands, utterly hopeless and helpless and sobbing dejectedly. She refused to reply.

"And you?" added the commander of the Ravager, gruffly, turning with a darkly scowling face upon Bert. "Aha!"

With a great start and rapidly discerning eyes the sea ruffian glared at

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Bert. He evidently recognized him. The adventure in the water when Bert had met Bob, and his later rough and hurried experience in the rescue of Hermione had disarranged and removed a part of his disguise, and the shrewd Rodridgo had pierced the present frail facial concealment.

"So," slowly but viciously purred Rodridgo, clinching his hands and thrusting forward his thin, working face toward the object of his rage—"so you have appeared upon the scene again? We have heard of your doings with your Destroyer—ha! ha! The Destroyer, indeed! By the tme we cut short your career as a traitor and a spy, the Destroyer will be fathoms deep, a victim to—dynamite!"

The commander of the Ravager hissed the last word venomously. Then he made a move as if to seize a cutlass lying on a table at his side, to make a swoop at the former cabin boy who had so nearly wrested the beautiful heiress, Hermione, from his avaricious clutches.

Suddenly—crash! It seemed as though all in an instant the Ravager had struck some great rock, or that some projectile of prodigious force had come in contact with the giant submarine. Bert caught a vague glimpse of Rodridgo flying head over heels from one end of the cabin to the other. He saw Hermione, with a shriek, sweep chair and all to the side of the cabin. As to himself, driven from his footing, he was cast prone upon the floor of the cabin. His head met some fixed piece of furniture and he was knocked senseless.

When later, one minute or ten, Bert knew not which, he opened his eyes, utter darkness was all about him. Every light on the submarine was out. He could hear shouts, cries, the tramping of hurrying men on the stairways leading to the lookout. The Ravager was swaying helplessly from side to side. The air pumps were quiet and the atmosphere was dense.

"She's sinking!"

"All hands to the turret!"

"What struck us?"

"Another submarine!"

"Another submarine?" repeated Bert, breathlessly. "Can it be—the Destroyer!"

A faint moan aroused him to a full realization of impending peril and the helpless situation. Bert groped about the floor of the cabin. His hand finally came in contact with a human hand.

"Hermione!" he spoke hurriedly.

There was no response. Bert bent over the senseless girl and gathered her up in his strong arms. As he forced open the cabin door, he could trace from a commotion aloft the fact that the boat was fast being deserted. With the life-saving air shut off and the submarine probably in momentary danger of sinking, he knew that he must reach the turret speedily if he hoped to escape and save the life of his precious charge.

It was well that Bert Noble was familiar with the interior of the Ravager. Even then he found it a difficult task to scale the stairways. Fresher air finally swept his face, then a spurt of water. He bore the unconscious Hermione up the last stairway and reached the lookout chamber.

"The Ravager is sinking!" he cried, and he carried his charge to the open aperture.

Two men, the last of the crew of the submarine, had just abandoned the ship. Water was slopping over the edge of the lookout, indicating that the boat was slowly sinking. Bert sprang into the sea. He feared that any moment the submarine might drop to the bed of the ocean. If the movement was sudden, they might be drawn down to their doom by the sinking mass. He held Hermione on one arm and swam desperately away from the fated submarine.

A shout caused him to look about him. A small collapsible yawl holding two sailors and Bob Archer was approaching. Just beyond them Bert caught sight of the top of the Destroyer.

"Just in time!" he panted, as he was relieved of his charge, and himself climbed into the yawl.

Bob placed the insensible Hermione in the bottom of the boat, while Bert looked all about him. Other small boats filled with the crew of the Destroyer were making for the nearest island. There, running to the cover of the shrubbery, were those who had escaped from the Ravager.

"What has happened?" questioned Bert.

"Don't you see?" responded Bob. "We attacked the Ravager under water."

"And she's sinking!"

"There she goes!"

The pirate submarine disappeared under the surface of the sea. And a few minutes later Bert and Hermione were safe on board of the Destroyer. Within the next hour the fair senorita had recovered sensibility, and blushingly thanked her hero rescuer for his latest act of bravery in her behalf.

Meantime the crew of the Destroyer pursued their enemy on the island. Some few escaped, but Red Rodridgo and the ringleaders of the buccaneer gang were captured.

The next day the commander of the Ravager and his confreres were delivered over to the American consul at the nearest port of entry. A week later they were sentenced to life imprisonment in chains.

Bob Archer, the Boy Detective, had performed his mission at last. Commerce in those Southern seas was safe

"Halt!"

again, for those waters had been effectually delivered from the worst prowler and marauder they had ever known. Bob was richly rewarded for his last and greatest act of detective work.

Bert Noble, too, won a reward of love and fortune. The fair Hermion revealed the secret hiding-place of the Consuelos treasure, and gave it and her hand to the brave, intrepid young lover who had brought about her rescue and happiness through the Rival Submarines.

The End.

He Got His Half.

"Can I get any work around here?" said Rastus Johnson, safe in the knowledge that there was not any.

"Yes, I want you to collect a bill for me from Mr. Sawyer, the lawyer. He has owed me this bill of twenty dollars for twenty years. If you can get the money I will give you half."

Old Rastus went to the business place of Mr. Sawyer and found him among a group of clients.

"Mr. Sawyer," said he, "Mr. Jones done tole me you owed him twenty dollars for about one hundred years."

"You idiot," said Sawyer, coming over to him, "don't you see you are ruining my business? Here's a ten dollar bill; now go on."

Rastus went back to the merchant and was asked if he got anything.

"Well, suh, I got mah haf, suh, but you better watch when you go after yo's, he's right hot over it."

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Spoke in Meeting.

When Sir Thomas Lipton was a small boy in Scotland, he dropped into a church one Sunday morning and was put by himself in a pew directly in front of the minister, who preached a sermon on the text, "Am I My Brother's Keeper?"

The parson, who was unusually eloquent, talked on this theme for about forty minutes, and finally worked up to the climax of his remarks. He kept his gaze fixed directly on the little Lipton, who began to fidget and look very self-conscious. At last, after an overwhelming outpouring of long words, the minister, his eyes blazing, made a quick gesture and shouted at the boy:

"Am I my brother's keeper?"

Lipton could stand the strain no longer, and replied in a meek voice:

"No, sir."

* * *

Louey—Ven I find your brother Fritz mitt my hands vill I punch him.

Hans—Vot has he did?

Louey—He insulted me. I dold him I vas going down to der tonsorial parlor to haf my head cleaned, und vot did he say?

Hans—Dell me.

Louey—He said: "Ach, don't go to a tonsorial barber; go to a vaccum cleaner."

* * *

A Buxom Couple.

Old sailors often like to tell of sea captains who formerly commanded the fast clipper ships. Mrs. Mary Heaton Vorse gives, in the words of Captain Isaiah Brewster, a description of one of "the smartest and ablest of 'em."

He was a sea cap'n, was what Cap'n Hezekiah Perkins was. He had a big han'some red face and stood six feet in his socks; he had an arm ca him like a tree and a fist like a ham, and a chest that was as thick through as it was wide, and that was some chest, I can tell you. And a beller like a bull, and eyes so blue—they don't make eyes blue like that any more—twinklin' and gay and roguish; and when he laughed the house shook, and every one else for about a mile round began to laugh, too, whether they heard the joke or not.

He wa'n't afraid of man or beast, nor even of the deep sea; but there was one person in the world more fearless than he was, and that was ol' Mis' Perkins, for she wa'n't even afraid of Hezekiah.

No, sir! That woman wa'n't afraid of him ashore nor yet afloat. She was a big, fresh, han'some woman, tipping the scales at nigh two hundred pounds, with a face as pink as hisn, and white hair.

When she walked across the floor the house shook; she planted her feet. When I hear nowadays about folks planting their feet, I think, "Pooh. That feller don't know what he's talkin' about; he's never heard old Mis' Perkins walk."

Say, 'twas a sight to see her and him start off to church, all canvas spread, and both of them with their pink faces, and her with her white hair shinin' under her bunnit, that was tied under her chin with a broad, han'some ribbin, and her shawl draped majestic over her shoulders. They don't make women like that now, nor no shawls, nor no bunnits.

He'd, go stompin' down the church aisle like it was a quarter-deck an' he owned it; and she sailin' beside him, plantin' her foot ev'ry time she lifted it, and with an air of more'n ownin' the quarter-deck, since it was him she owned.

* * *

The Biggest Tip.

This is the story of the most costly tip of recent record. A wealthy brewer admired the manner in which his waiter cared for him at the club.

"Philip," the brewer would say, "get me a quail."

"Here is your quail, Mr. Gehret," the waiter would report. "I made the chef go away from the stove and broiled it myself."

Whereupon Mr. Gehret would smile upon Philip fondly, and Philip would go back to the kitchen to take another quail from the hands of the cook for some other patron. One day he called Philip over. "Here, my man," said he, peeling off a $500 bill. "There's a little reward for your courtesy and care."

Philip held up a protesting hand. He didn't think it would be honest, he said. The club did not allow him to take tips, except through the Christmas box. It was not that he could not use the money, or that he did not appreciate Mr. Gehret's generosity, but he really must decline. Exit Philip, wiping tears out of his eyes with a napkin. Mr. Gehret was profoundly impressed.

A few weeks later Philip discovered to Mr. Gehret an excellent business opportunity uptown. "Ah," sighed Philip, "if I only had the money."

Mr. Gehret offered to stake him—and did, to the tune of $80,000. The last of the $80,000 was spent the other day, and Philip is back at the club. Now and then the patron and the waiter—both good losers—grin at each other across the linen.

"After all, Philip," says Mr. Gehret, "we had a good time while we were in business together."

* * *

Disappointment.

"Chief," remarked the barber, "will you have a close shave today?" The appellation "chief" interested the man in the next chair, and he cast a keen look toward his neighbor. He saw a man of impressive mien wearing a blue uniform with red stripes on the arm. Could he be the chief or police?—or fire chief?—or chief justice?—or what?

"Yes, indeed, chief. And I think it'll be hotter tomorrow, chief. Witch hazel, chief?"

Thus ran the conversation between the barber and his august customer. The man in the next chair became more and more impressed. To each question the "chief" answered in commanding monosyllables. Perhaps, thought the man in the next chair, he was chief of staff somewhere. Surely his position must be extremely important.

"There you are, chief. Thank you, chief. Good day, chief."

Impressively the "chief" left the barber shop, disclosing as he did some more red stripes and a fine row of brass buttons. The other could stand the suspense no longer.

"Say, who is that who just left the shop?" he inquired of his barber.

"Him? Why, he's chief porter at the hotel across the street."

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